



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

TUESDAY — 26 APR 2022



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	04/26 Stinger missile supply restock challenges
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/shrinking-us-stinger-missile-supply-faces-re-stocking-challenges-2022-04-26/">https://www.reuters.com/world/shrinking-us-stinger-missile-supply-faces-re-stocking-challenges-2022-04-26/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, April 26 (Reuters) - Shoulder-fired Stinger missiles are in hot demand in Ukraine where they have successfully stopped Russian assaults from the air, but U.S. supplies have shrunk and producing more of the anti-aircraft weapons faces significant hurdles.</p> <p>Challenges include complications related to ramping up production, reluctance by the U.S. to redirect valuable manufacturing capacity to decades-old technology, and fears among defense firms that they would be stuck with unwanted arms when the Ukraine war winds down, according to interviews with U.S. officials and defense firms.</p> <p>While U.S. troops themselves have limited use for the current supply of Stingers -- a lightweight, self-contained weapon that can be deployed quickly to defend against helicopters, airplanes, drones and even cruise missiles -- the U.S. needs to maintain its supply on hand while it develops the next generation of a "man-portable air defense system."</p> <p>"Right before Ukraine hit, we were going to divest ourselves of Stingers," a congressional source said. Still, Pentagon officials are concerned about a "dwindling" surplus, according to a Pentagon official and the congressional source.</p> <p>Ukrainian troops have shot down at least six targets during the conflict using Lithuanian-provided Stingers, according to an April 6 Facebook post by Arvydas Anusauskas, Lithuania's defense minister, including helicopters, planes, drones and a cruise missile. Reuters could not verify the claim.</p> <p>Since February, the U.S. has shipped 1,400 Stingers to Ukraine, according to an administration official. But sourcing more will be difficult.</p> <p>The Stinger production line was closed in December 2020, said Pentagon spokesperson Jessica Maxwell. Since then, Raytheon Technologies (RTX.N) won a contract in July 2021 to manufacture more Stingers, but mainly for international governments, according to the U.S. Army. The sole Stinger facility, in Arizona, only produces at a low rate.</p> <p>The Pentagon has not ordered new Stingers for many years, but has ordered parts or made other efforts to increase its supply. For example, the Army is in the midst of a "service life extension plan" for some of its Stingers that were to become obsolete in 2023 and is extending what the military calls their "useful life" until 2030.</p> <p>The Pentagon, which has thrown together weekly meetings to discuss surging weapons demand from Eastern Europe, met with a group of eight defense contractor CEOs in mid-April to talk over the supply of weapons to Ukraine, including the Stinger.</p> <p>Two sources familiar with the meeting said Raytheon CEO Greg Hayes noted that it can require six to 12 months to restart a munitions production line.</p> <p>Raytheon declined to comment.</p> <p>At the CEO meeting, industry executives voiced reservations about increasing weapons production. One CEO said that when the Ukraine war winds down, they do not want to be stuck with warehouses full of unsellable inventory without a guaranteed buyer, three people familiar with the discussion said.</p> <p>Congress also wants more Stingers, or at least something that can do the same job.</p> <p>The chairman of the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, Representative Adam Smith, wrote Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin last week and pointed out an "apparent absence of a Department of Defense plan to meet short-range air defense replenishment requirements for not only our U.S. stocks of Stinger systems, but those of other contributing allies and partners."</p>

	<p>A Pentagon official who oversees weapons acquisitions for the Army, Doug Bush, told Congress on March 31 the Defense Department was putting together a plan to increase Stinger production and planned to inform Congress imminently.</p> <p>But as of late last week, a second congressional source who spoke on condition of anonymity said there has been no information about the plan.</p> <p>Senator Richard Blumenthal, a member of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services, asked Austin earlier in April at a Senate budget hearing about using the Defense Production Act (DPA) to restore depleted supplies of Stingers and Javelins.</p> <p>But using the DPA, which forces industry to put resources into an immediate effort to make a product needed for national security purposes, is premature, the Pentagon's Maxwell said.</p> <p>Longer term, the Army is looking for a replacement for the Stinger that will go into production in 2027.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Russia pounds eastern Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-business-nato-9198d40f605385550c02e82c6366ccca">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-business-nato-9198d40f605385550c02e82c6366ccca</a>
GIST	<p>TORETSK, Ukraine (AP) — Russia pounded eastern Ukraine on Tuesday as the U.S. defense secretary promised to “keep moving heaven and earth” to get Kyiv the weapons it needs to repel the new offensive even as Moscow warned such support risked widening the war.</p> <p>Two months into the devastating conflict, Western arms have already helped Ukraine stall Russia’s invasion — but its leaders have said they need more support fast.</p> <p>U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said that help was on the way, as he convened a meeting of officials from around 40 countries at the United States’ Ramstein Air Base in Germany to pledge more weapons. Germany announced it cleared the way for delivery of Gepard anti-aircraft guns to Ukraine.</p> <p>“This gathering reflects the galvanized world,” Austin said in his opening remarks. He added that he wanted officials to leave the meeting “with a common and transparent understanding of Ukraine’s near-term security requirements because we’re going to keep moving heaven and earth so that we can meet them.”</p> <p>After fierce defense by Ukrainian forces thwarted Russia’s attempt to take Ukraine’s capital early in the war, Moscow now says its focus is the Donbas, the mostly Russian-speaking industrial region in eastern Ukraine. That move is already having a devastating effect on civilians trapped in the conflict.</p> <p>In the small city of Toretsk, residents are struggling to survive, collecting rainwater for cleaning and washing up and fervently hoping for an end to the fighting.</p> <p>“It’s bad. Very bad. Hopeless,” said Andriy Cheromushkin. “You feel so helpless that you don’t know what you should do or shouldn’t do. Because if you want to do something, you need some money; and there is no money now.”</p> <p>With the potentially pivotal battle for the Donbas underway, the U.S. and its NATO allies are scrambling to get artillery and other heavy weaponry to that area in time to make a difference.</p> <p>German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said her government decided on Monday to clear the delivery of Gepard self-propelled armored anti-aircraft guns to Ukraine, though she didn’t give details. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has faced mounting pressure, including from within his governing coalition, to approve sending heavy weapons such as tanks and other armored vehicles to Ukraine.</p>

Austin also noted Tuesday that more than 30 allies and partners have joined the U.S. in sending security assistance to Ukraine and more than \$5 billion worth of equipment committed.

The meeting in Germany comes after Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, speaking on Russian television, warned weapons supplied by Western countries “will be a legitimate target,” and accused NATO of “pouring oil on the fire” with its support for Ukraine, according to a transcript on the Russian Foreign Ministry’s website.

Lavrov also warned against provoking World War III and said the threat of a nuclear conflict “should not be underestimated.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin has cited NATO’s expansion and the risk that Kyiv could join the alliance as reasons for his invasion.

U.K. Armed Forces Minister James Heappey rejected Lavrov’s accusations of NATO aggression as “utter nonsense.”

He said “the reason there is a war in Ukraine right now is because Russia rolled over the borders of a sovereign country and started to invade their territory.”

Heappey also said Russia was making “unsound” military decisions and giving away tactical advantages because of Putin’s desire to secure some kind of victory by May 9, when Russia marks its victory in World War II.

Amid the talk of arms shipments, diplomatic efforts to seek an end to the fighting also continued. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres met Lavrov on Tuesday and called again for a cease-fire. The U.N. chief is scheduled to meet Putin later.

Elsewhere, International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi visited the Chernobyl nuclear plant to deliver equipment, conduct radiological assessments and restore safeguards monitoring systems after tanks and troops churned up highly contaminated soil there in the early hours of Russia’s invasion in February. His visit comes on the anniversary of the disaster at the plant in 1986, the world’s worst nuclear accident.

In its latest assessment of the fighting, the British Defense Ministry reported Russian advances and heavy fighting in the Donbas region, with one town, Kreminna, reportedly falling after days of street-to-street fighting.

Ukraine’s General Staff said Russian forces shelled Kharkiv, the country’s second-largest city that lies outside the Donbas but has seen significant attacks as Moscow seeks full control of the region. Ukrainian forces struck back in the Kherson region in the south.

A senior Russian military official has said that Russia’s goal is full control of Ukraine’s east and south, which would give it a swath of land that lies between Russia and Crimea, which Moscow seized in 2014.

Four people died and nine more were wounded on Monday in the Russian shelling of the Donetsk region of the Donbas, its governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said on Telegram. He said a 9-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy were among those killed.

The city council and mayor of Mariupol said a new mass grave was identified about 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of the port city, which is key to the battle of the Donbas. Mayor Vadym Boychenko said authorities were trying to estimate the number of victims. It was at least the third new mass grave discovered in Russian-controlled areas near Mariupol in the last week.

Mariupol has been gutted by bombardment and fierce street fighting over the past two months. Russia’s capture of the city, where an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian troops and some 1,000 civilians are reportedly

	<p>sheltering in a sprawling steel works, would deprive Ukraine of a vital port, help complete the land corridor to Crimea and free up troops to redeploy elsewhere in the Donbas.</p> <p>Britain said it believes 15,000 Russian troops have been killed in Ukraine since Russia's invasion began — far above the 1,351 deaths acknowledged by Moscow. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said 25% of the Russian combat units sent to Ukraine “have been rendered not combat effective.”</p> <p>Ukrainian officials have said about 2,500 to 3,000 Ukrainian troops had been killed as of mid-April.</p> <p>The West hopes that boosting arms supplies will help remaining fighters repel Russia's invasion.</p> <p>As he opened the meeting in Germany, Austin sought to reassure Kyiv: “We know, and you should know, that all of us have your back and that's why we're here today — to strengthen the arsenal of Ukrainian democracy.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Shanghai shutdowns worsening shortages</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/everything-is-halted-shanghai-shutdowns-are-worsening-shortages/ar-AAWBCt6">https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/everything-is-halted-shanghai-shutdowns-are-worsening-shortages/ar-AAWBCt6</a>
GIST	<p>Thousands of air fryers are stuck in factories, warehouses and ports in central China, where shutdowns have stalled millions of dollars worth of inventory for Yedi Houseware, a family-run business in Los Angeles.</p> <p>How quickly those backlogged appliances make it to the United States could have wide-ranging implications across the U.S. economy, as domestic manufacturers and retailers brace for another round of disruptions from recent covid-related shutdowns in Shanghai, China's largest city. White House officials are paying close attention to the disruptions to monitor the potential impact on the U.S. economy.</p> <p>“Things are getting crazy again,” said Bobby Djavaheri, the company's president. “Everything is halted. There are closures this very minute that are adding to the supply chain nightmare we've been experiencing for two years.”</p> <p>Other executives are dealing with similar scrambles as the situation in China appears to change every day, sweeping up many different sectors.</p> <p>Widespread covid outbreaks in China have bought entire cities to a standstill and hobbled manufacturing and shipping hubs throughout the country. An estimated 373 million people — or about one-quarter of China's population — have been in covid-related lockdowns in recent weeks because of what is known as the country's zero covid policy, according to economists at Nomura Holdings. There are also fears that new lockdowns could soon take hold in the capital city, Beijing, escalating the threat to the global economic recovery.</p> <p>Anxiety over new disruptions has already caused the Chinese stock market to fall sharply, weighing on U.S. stock indexes as well.</p> <p>And there are signs things could only get worse. Continuing lockdowns in Shanghai — a major hub for America's semiconductor and electronics supply chains — has set up automakers, electronics companies and consumer goods firms for months of delays and higher costs.</p> <p>The challenges come on top of more than two years of global shipping disruptions that some had hoped would ease this year.</p> <p>Tech giants and major automakers rely heavily on Shanghai-based suppliers and ports. Roughly one-half of Apple's top suppliers, for example, are based in or near the city, according to an analysis by Nikkei Asia. (Apple did not immediately respond to requests for comment.) Meanwhile, Volkswagen's chief</p>

executive said this month that the automaker is “temporarily unable to meet high customer demand” because of ongoing lockdowns. The company, which had to stop production at certain facilities for more than a month for covid-related reasons, says it is gradually resuming production now.

“If Shanghai continues being unable to resume work and production, from May, all tech and industrial players involving the Shanghai supply chain will completely shut down, especially the auto industry!” Richard Yu, head of consumer and auto business at Chinese tech giant Huawei, was reported to have said on the social media platform WeChat.

The delays and closures are adding to costs and could pose another threat to long-term inflation, which is already at a 40-year high. Yedi Housewares, for example, raised prices on all of its products, including air fryers, electric pressure cookers and bread makers, by 10 percent in January.

Costs have continued to climb since then, in part because of the war in Ukraine. The price of plastic, a major component in air fryers, is up about 5 percent this year, Djavaheri said. The company is also paying more for transportation, since it’s begun moving goods by truck from Shanghai to ports in Ningbo, three hours away, in hopes of putting them on a ship there.

White House officials are closely monitoring the situation in Shanghai, with the State Department providing frequent updates on the potential impacts. New economic data from March shows Chinese exports of good rose by 15 percent relative to last year, but this data does not reflect the impact of the Shanghai lockdown that began at the end of last month, according to a White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide internal administration assessments.

The administration is already seeing “significant impacts” to airports critical to air cargo shipments and links in the supply chain such as factories and warehouses, the person said. Despite the closure of the port, White House officials are seeing alternate ports ratcheting up their work, relieving some of the expected pressure for consumers.

Mark Beneke, who co-owns a used car dealership in Fresno, Calif., says it’s become increasingly difficult to secure parts for Asian-made vehicles like Hyundai Sonatas and Kia Optimas since the Shanghai lockdown began a month ago.

Used car prices are already up 35 percent from a year ago, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Beneke says he expects them to climb even higher in coming weeks as a result of new shortages and delays.

“We were expecting prices to start coming down this summer, but it looks like they’re going to keep going up,” he said.

In some cases, though, retailers are better positioned to weather the latest challenges than they were a year ago. Many have stashed away extra inventory in U.S. warehouses and stores to guard against supply chain delays. Roughly 90 percent of goods at grocery and drugstores are in stock, according to data analytics firm Information Resources. And the number of import containers sitting on the docks for more than nine days at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach has been cut by one-half since October.

At the same time, consumer demand for many goods — including clothing, toys and furniture — appears to be waning as people spend more on travel, dining out and other experiences that they largely avoided earlier in the pandemic.

“The demand just isn’t there anymore,” said Isaac Larian, chief executive of MGA Entertainment, the toy giant behind popular brands like Little Tikes and L.O.L. Surprise. “Sales are slowing down. Families are saying, ‘I’ll take my kids to Disney this summer instead of buying more toys.’”

The shipping time for toys from China to U.S. stores has ballooned from 21 days to 159 days during the pandemic, he said.

	<p>“All holiday toys have to ship out of China by the beginning of August, but that is not going to happen,” Larian said. “The factories are having a tough time getting labor, prices are going up, China keeps closing provinces. The big picture is bad, worse than last year.”</p> <p>Back in Los Angeles, Djavaheri of Yedi Houseware, says he’s just beginning to recover from closures in southern China earlier this year, where his company makes electric pressure cookers. The brand — which has been featured in Oprah’s Favorite Things list for three years in a row — is still struggling to make enough products to meet demand.</p> <p>“To be honest, I don’t even want to be in China but it’s the only option,” Djavaheri said. “If there was a way to make air fryers or electric pressure cookers in America, I would’ve been there yesterday. Instead we’re dealing with hurdle after hurdle: Inflation, logistics, it’s a constant nightmare.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 UN probing unlawful killings in Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-04-26-22/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-04-26-22/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>The UN is investigating 300 unlawful killings in Ukraine, the head of its monitoring mission in the country Matilda Bogner told CNN Tuesday.</p> <p>Speaking on CNN Newsroom, Bogner relayed the scale of civilian atrocities the mission has documented throughout the war so far, including cases of sexual violence and arbitrary detentions.</p> <p>So far the mission has documented up to 5,000 civilian casualties, Bogner said, noting the actual number will be "thousands" higher. Currently the UN is investigating 150 cases of enforced disappearances.</p> <p>"Again, the number of cases are higher than that, these are just the cases that we have sufficient information about to already look into," she said.</p> <p>"We are hearing in some of the areas occupied by the Russian Federation, that they are targeting people who have pro Ukrainian views. For example, local officials, activists, human rights defenders, sometimes journalists who they consider have pro Ukrainian views are being detained. They often disappear. Some have been released, which is good, but others have since been found dead.</p> <p>"We are also trying to document cases of sexual violence. Unfortunately it's very difficult to get full information. Victims usually are not willing to speak in areas that are unsafe, when they haven't had services provided to them.</p> <p>"So it is very important that these services are provided, that people are able to have access, and move to safer areas. And it's only when that happens that we will start to get the full picture of what's really going on in the country."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Mariupol mayor: third mass graves found</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-04-26-22/h_83b9f0a9cf1980d2f84b5fd3b7c3520a">https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-04-26-22/h_83b9f0a9cf1980d2f84b5fd3b7c3520a</a>
GIST	<p>A third mass grave has been found near Mariupol, the mayor of the besieged southeastern city told Ukrainian television Tuesday.</p> <p>In addition to mass graves uncovered in the villages of Mangush and Vynohradne, "now we see there is another one," said Vadym Boichenko.</p> <p>New satellite imagery has shown a mass grave at the village of Staryi Krym, according to the Telegram channel of the city authorities.</p>



The images showed excavated trenches on the territory of the Old Crimean cemetery, the city council said on Telegram.

They appeared on March 24, after the village was occupied by the Russians, and were about 60 to 70 meters long, the council said.

By April 7, according to new imagery, part of the trenches had been covered, the council said, and the burial area had grown.

"New trenches were recorded on April 24. The length of the mass grave has increased to more than 200 meters," it said.

Boichenko accused Russian forces of involving the local population in mass burials in exchange for food.

"They [the locals] told us that you have to work 'hours' to have food and water. Now there is not enough humanitarian aid in Mariupol so people are forced to do it," he said on Telegram.

CNN is unable to confirm the city's account of the mass graves. The images, from Planet Labs, were first reported by Radio Free Europe (RFE/RL) on Monday.

CNN has reviewed satellite imagery purportedly showing mass graves at Vynohradne, but it is unclear beyond the disturbance of the ground what may have transpired there.

Last week, Ukrainian officials identified the location of mass graves at Manhush near Mariupol after the publication of satellite images collected by and analyzed by Maxar Technologies.

Petro Andriushchenko, an advisor to the mayor Mariupol, posted about the mass grave at Manhush on Telegram on Thursday.

"As a result of a long search and identification of places of mass burial of dead Mariupol residents, we established the fact of arrangement and mass burial of the dead Mariupol residents in the village of Manhush," he wrote.

Andriushchenko -- who is not in Mariupol but has served as a clearinghouse for information from inside the besieged city -- said Russian forces had dug several mass graves, each measuring about 30 meters (around 100 feet), in Manhush, a town around 12 miles (20 kilometers) to the west of Mariupol.

On Tuesday Boichenko repeated that some 20,000 residents of Mariupol had died since the beginning of the invasion.

"The situation in Mariupol remains extremely difficult," he said. "Enemy artillery shells our fortress Azovstal," the steel plant where Ukrainian troops and civilians are holed up.

"There are women and children inside. Ceasefire is needed to begin the evacuation. Unfortunately, there is no ceasefire," Boichenko said. "People are running out of food, there is almost no drinking water. This is a humanitarian catastrophe."

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HEADLINE	04/25 Growing US military footprint in Europe
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/25/growing-us-footprint-europe-brings-hard-questions-/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/25/growing-us-footprint-europe-brings-hard-questions-/</a>
GIST	The U.S. military footprint in Europe has vastly expanded in the two months since Russia invaded Ukraine, with more than 100,000 troops now on the ground on a continent where the talk until recently was on how and where to cut back.



The looming question for Pentagon planners now is how many troops should stay and for how long.

Russia's assault on Ukraine has sparked a high-stakes debate about how best to use American boots on the ground in Europe as a show of solidarity with Kyiv and as a deterrent against any Russian move against NATO's eastern flank, such as an attack on Baltic nations or a strike on Poland.

Inside the Pentagon and in national security circles, the questions center on whether the U.S. should dramatically increase the number of troops permanently stationed across Europe, with all the attendant costs and commitments, or ramp up rotational deployments of service members on missions typically lasting less than a year.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark A. Milley recently told Congress that he favors the construction of permanent U.S. bases in Eastern Europe but wants to staff those facilities primarily with rotational troops. Such an approach carries a host of benefits, most notably on the financial front. Rotational deployments are less costly, mainly because the troops' spouses and children usually remain in the U.S. Troops on multiyear deployments stay with their families on American military bases.

That approach has critics, especially given the security climate in Europe.

Proponents of more permanent deployments say that increasing the number of U.S. troops on rotation through Europe isn't a strong enough show of force to change Russian President Vladimir Putin's cost-benefit analysis. They say a more permanent American presence would carry tangible benefits in the worst-case scenarios of an all-out NATO showdown with Russia.

"We can't have forces slated to reinforce Europe waiting in garrisons in the U.S. They need to be ready, and they need to be permanently deployed to the front lines in Europe," said Jim Townsend, who was deputy assistant secretary of defense for European and NATO policy during the Obama administration.

"We've got to lean toward deployed forces in Europe. There's a role for rotational forces, but forces are vulnerable when they transit the Atlantic," he told The Washington Times in an interview. "We need to have full-time forces there. I know the Pentagon doesn't like to hear that for various reasons, but I think it's a mistake to just do more of what we're already doing. We need to have more armor permanently deployed in Europe.

"To rotate an armored brigade combat team to Europe, their equipment has to go over on ships. If we are in a conflict with Russia, we won't have time to wait for ships, and they may be intercepted in the Atlantic before they even reach Europe. We need to have more armor permanently deployed to Europe, not just rotating in," he said.

The Pentagon is reimagining its approach to troop deployments against the backdrop of Europe's biggest ground war since World War II and longer-term strategic hopes of reorienting U.S. power to face China, not Russia.

Russia's unprovoked assault on Ukraine continued Monday with strikes on Ukrainian rail and fuel depots. The Russian military is working to cripple Ukrainian supply lines and prevent equipment from reaching the eastern front.

Russian forces have massed in eastern Ukraine in a major offensive on the disputed Donbas region, which has become the epicenter of the war. Russian troops also are seeking to capture the devastated port city of Mariupol, which would create a land bridge between the Donbas and the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia forcibly annexed in 2014.

To help beat back that Russian offensive, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Kyiv over the weekend and announced another American military assistance package to Ukraine. Underscoring the high stakes of the conflict, Ukrainian officials said such aid is crucial but the Western world must do more to stop Russian aggression, which they said will surely not stop in Ukraine.

“As long as Russian soldiers put a foot on Ukrainian soil, nothing is enough,” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told The Associated Press on Monday. He said the U.S. and NATO must do more to “stop Putin in Ukraine and not to allow him to go further, deeper into Europe.”

Russia was complaining about the growing number of U.S. troops near its borders weeks before Mr. Putin authorized the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said at a Feb. 3 briefing that the U.S. was fueling tensions in the region by sending more troops to Poland and Romania in response to the Russian military buildup on the Ukrainian border.

“Clearly, Russian concerns are justified and understandable,” Mr. Peskov told reporters. “All measures to ensure Russia’s security and interests are also understandable.”

Ironically in light of the debate, the Biden administration defended the troop deployments in part because they were temporary and could be reversed if Russia stepped back.

“These are not permanent moves. They are precisely in response to the current security environment in light of this increasing threatening behavior by the Russian Federation,” State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

#### A major buildup

The Biden administration has vowed to defend every inch of NATO territory from Russia, essentially guaranteeing a world war scenario if Russian troops press beyond Ukraine. A central part of the U.S. deterrence strategy has been to send tens of thousands more troops to Europe at a pace not seen since the Cold War.

Such major increases in U.S. troop deployments seemed unthinkable a few years ago. President Trump and his national security team, skeptical of many NATO allies, looked to shrink the overall number of U.S. troops in Europe and reposition more than 10,000 forces from Germany.

President Biden and Mr. Austin quickly stopped that plan after taking office in January 2021.

Fifteen months later, The U.S. footprint has expanded to its highest level in years. In January, as the world watched to see whether Mr. Putin would attack Ukraine, about 80,000 U.S. troops were stationed across Europe.

Now, about 102,000 American forces are in Europe, military officials told The Times on Monday. Of those, about 65,000 are on a permanent deployment and remain there for several years. The remaining troops are in Europe on a rotational basis, officials said.

Such an approach has become common in Europe, the Korean Peninsula and other theaters with significant U.S. troop presences. Troops often arrive on short-term deployments to take part in military exercises or could be sent temporarily to hot spots such as Eastern Europe to demonstrate American resolve in the face of a potential attack.

In Eastern Europe in particular, Gen. Milley said, the U.S. can essentially have the best of both worlds.

“My advice would be to create permanent bases but don’t permanently station. So you get the effect of permanence by rotational forces cycling through permanent bases,” Gen. Milley told House lawmakers during a recent hearing. “And what you don’t have to do is incur the cost of family moves, PXs, schools, housing and that sort of thing. So you cycle through expeditionary forces through forward deployed permanent bases.

“You get the effect of permanent presence of forces, but the actual individual soldier, sailor, airman and Marine is not permanently stationed there for two or three years,” he said.

	<p>That approach clearly has supporters inside the Pentagon, but strong arguments could be made for more permanent deployments. Some evidence shows that rotations don't always generate as much cost savings as anticipated.</p> <p>Perhaps more important, permanent troop deployments may send stronger signals to allies and enemies. During the Trump administration, Poland lobbied for more American troops on its soil and even offered to build a \$2 billion "Fort Trump" to house them.</p> <p>"In terms of diplomatic or political-military factors, forward stationing is preferred by American allies overseas over rotational deployments. Allies perceive forward-stationed forces as a sign of a stronger, more enduring commitment from the United States," U.S. Army War College researcher John R. Deni said in a 2017 report examining Army deployments around the world.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Russia pilot seen in China jet trainer crash</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/25/russian-pilot-seen-china-jet-trainer-crash/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/25/russian-pilot-seen-china-jet-trainer-crash/</a>
GIST	<p>Online video showing a Chinese jet crash over the weekend reveals that the Chinese air force is receiving flight training from Russian instructors, according to U.S. and Chinese social media reports.</p> <p>The Russian military assistance was shown in the aftermath of a crash of a two-seat JL-10 supersonic jet trainer on Saturday. Local residents recorded the crash scene and pilots and posted the footage online.</p> <p>Two pilots were shown in a field shortly after ejecting from the JL-10 with minimal injuries. One pilot, wearing a Chinese air force uniform, spoke on a cellphone with his commander in Chinese. The second pilot was a red-haired Caucasian who spoke English with an accent.</p> <p>"Don't do that," the foreign pilot said to one villager using a video camera.</p> <p>Chinese social media described the man as a Russian flight instructor.</p> <p>The JL-10 trainer is a built-in-China jet based on the Russian Yak-130 trainer and began flying in China in 2019.</p> <p>The use of Russian flight instructors is not unusual for training pilots in aircraft designed by Moscow. The employment of non-Chinese pilot instructors, however, is considered a Chinese military secret. The People's Liberation Army insists its military forces are self-sufficient and do not rely on foreign training, analysts say.</p> <p>A Chinese dissident source said Russian flight instructors have been training Chinese pilots on the JL-10 for at least a year. Russian military instructors also trained Chinese pilots in conducting aircraft carrier landings.</p> <p>On the phone call in the video, the Chinese pilot was overheard telling a military commissar that he suspected he had broken his leg in the crash. The footage was first posted on the Chinese social media platform Weibo and reposted on Twitter.</p> <p>Several videos of the crash scene were posted. One showed the JL-10 flying overhead, and another showed a large plume of black smoke and debris from the crash site.</p> <p>The video of the two downed pilots showed a villager asking, "Are you a member of the People's Liberation Army?" The villager then pointed to the foreigner and asked, "Who is that?"</p> <p>"This is our instructor," the Chinese pilot responded. "Don't take photos." The video ended at that point.</p>

	<p>The location was reported on Twitter as Zhenligu township in Henan province, about 434 miles south of Beijing. Another jet crash was reported in Anhui province.</p> <p>“Are these pilots doing surrender exercises?” one Chinese Twitter user asked.</p> <p>The Chinese Defense Ministry announced in January that the first set of pilots had been trained at the Shijiazhuang Flight Academy in western Hubei province.</p> <p>Derek Solen, a civilian analyst with the U.S. Air Force’s China Aerospace Studies Institute, said in a recent report that the JL-10 training would be used to prepare combat pilots for the fifth-generation J-20 fighters. The J-20 is China’s most advanced warplane. The Pentagon has said it was developed and built with stolen technology from the U.S. F-35 and F-22 jets.</p> <p>The Air Force think tank report said Chinese flight instructors have “performed poorly” and lost their positions.</p> <p>“While the [PLA air force’s] policy ensures that new flight instructors be relatively experienced pilots and that the flight academies be more closely connected to operational units and their real-world missions, the flight academies are making efforts to give their current flight instructors opportunities to gain the experience and skills that their new colleagues should have,” he said.</p> <p>The report did not mention foreign flight instructors being used in the PLA air force.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Biden pardons ex-Secret Service, 2 others</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/biden-pardons-former-secret-service-agent-and-2-others/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/biden-pardons-former-secret-service-agent-and-2-others/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has granted the first three pardons of his term, providing clemency to a Kennedy-era Secret Service agent convicted of federal bribery charges that he tried to sell a copy of an agency file and to two people who were convicted on drug-related charges but went on to become pillars in their communities.</p> <p>The Democratic president also commuted the sentences of 75 others for nonviolent, drug-related convictions. The White House announced the clemencies Tuesday as it launched a series of job training and reentry programs for those in prison or recently released.</p> <p>Many of those who received commutations have been serving their sentences on home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several were serving lengthy sentences and would have received lesser terms had they been convicted today for the same offenses as a result of the 2018 bipartisan sentencing reform ushered into law by the Trump administration.</p> <p>“America is a nation of laws and second chances, redemption, and rehabilitation,” Biden said in a statement announcing the clemencies. “Elected officials on both sides of the aisle, faith leaders, civil rights advocates, and law enforcement leaders agree that our criminal justice system can and should reflect these core values that enable safer and stronger communities.”</p> <p>Those granted pardons are:</p> <p>— Abraham Bolden Sr., 86, the first Black Secret Service agent to serve on a presidential detail. In 1964, Bolden, who served on President John F. Kennedy’s detail, faced federal bribery charges that he attempted to sell a copy of a Secret Service file. His first trial ended in a hung jury.</p> <p>Following his conviction in a second trial, key witnesses admitted lying at the prosecutor’s request. Bolden, of Chicago, was denied a retrial and served several years in federal prison. Bolden has maintained</p>

his innocence and wrote a book in which he argued he was targeted for speaking out against racist and unprofessional behavior in the Secret Service.

— Betty Jo Bogans, 51, was convicted in 1998 of possession with intent to distribute crack cocaine in Texas after attempting to transport drugs for her boyfriend and his accomplice. Bogans, a single mother with no prior record, received a seven-year sentence. In the years since her release from prison, Bogans has held consistent employment, even while undergoing cancer treatment, and has raised a son.

— Dexter Jackson, 52, of Athens, Georgia, was convicted in 2002 for using his pool hall to facilitate the trafficking of marijuana. Jackson pleaded guilty and acknowledged he allowed his business to be used by marijuana dealers.

After Jackson was released from prison, he converted his business into a cellphone repair service that employs local high school students through a program that provides young adults with work experience. Jackson has built and renovated homes in his community, which has a shortage of affordable housing.

Civil rights and criminal justice reform groups have pushed the White House to commute sentences and work harder to reduce disparities in the criminal justice system. Biden's grants of clemency also come as the administration has faced congressional scrutiny over misconduct and the treatment of inmates in the beleaguered federal Bureau of Prisons, which is responsible for inmates serving sentences of home confinement.

Biden, as head of the Senate Judiciary Committee, helped shepherd through the 1994 crime bill that many criminal justice experts say contributed to harsh sentences and mass incarceration of Black people.

During his 2020 White House run, Biden vowed to reduce the number of people incarcerated in the U.S. and called for nonviolent drug offenders to be diverted to drug courts and treatment.

He also has pushed for better training for law enforcement and called for criminal justice system changes to address disparities that have led to minorities and the poor making up a disproportionate share of the nation's incarcerated population.

Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, granted 143 pardons and clemency to 237 during his four years in office.

Trump sought the advice of prison reform advocate Alice Johnson, a Black woman whose life sentence for a nonviolent drug offense he commuted in 2018. He was also lobbied by celebrity Kim Kardashian as well as advisers inside the White House, including daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner, as he weighed applications for clemency.

The Republican used his pardon authority to help several political friends and allies, including former campaign chairman Paul Manafort, Republican operative Roger Stone and Charles Kushner, the father-in-law of Ivanka Trump.

Among Trump's final acts as president was pardoning his former chief strategist Steve Bannon and Al Pirro, the husband of Fox News host and Trump ally Jeanine Pirro.

Prosecutors alleged that Bannon, who had yet to stand trial when he was pardoned, had duped thousands of donors who believed their money would be used to fulfill Trump's chief campaign promise to build a wall along the southern border. Instead, Bannon allegedly diverted more than \$1 million, paying a salary to one campaign official and personal expenses for himself. Pirro was convicted in 2000 on tax charges.

With the slate of pardons and commutations announced Tuesday, Biden has issued more grants of clemency than any of the previous five presidents at this point in their terms, according to the White House.

	<p>In addition to the grants of clemency, Biden announced several new initiatives that are meant to help formerly incarcerated people gain employment — an issue that his administration is driving home as key to lowering crime rates and preventing recidivism.</p> <p>The Labor Department is directing \$140 million toward programs that offer job training, pre-apprenticeship programs, digital literacy training and pre-release and post-release career counseling and more for youth and incarcerated adults.</p> <p>The \$1 trillion infrastructure bill passed by Congress last year includes a trio of grant programs that the administration says promote hiring of formerly incarcerated individuals. And the Labor and Justice Departments announced on Tuesday a collaborative plan to provide \$145 million over the next year on job skills training as well as individualized employment and reentry plans for people serving time in the Bureau of Prisons.</p> <p>Biden said the new initiatives are vital to helping the more than 600,000 people released from prison each year get on stable ground.</p> <p>“Helping those who served their time return to their families and become contributing members of their communities is one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism and decrease crime,” Biden said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/25 Canada faces an increase in asylum seekers</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/canada-asylum-seekers-numbers-covid-restrictions">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/canada-asylum-seekers-numbers-covid-restrictions</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Snowy northern winters tend to see a drop in asylum seekers crossing from the United States into Canada at Roxham Road in Quebec. Not this past winter.</p> <p>In December, the number of asylum seekers entering Canada outside formal land border crossings reached its highest point since August 2017, government statistics show.</p> <p>The growing caseload is lengthening wait times for eligibility hearings, leaving claimants waiting months on social assistance before getting work permits, one attorney said.</p> <p>The increase follows the lifting of a pandemic-era order in December. Since March 2020, border police had refused entry to all asylum seekers in order to curb the spread of Covid.</p> <p>“It seems to me the ministry has been caught off guard,” said Montreal lawyer Pierre-Luc Bouchard, who has 70 refugee cases after two years with almost zero new clients. “They are completely confused.”</p> <p>A spokesperson for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada said that the increase was expected and said the agency is working to speed up applications and shorten eligibility hearing wait times.</p> <p>In December, Royal Canadian Mounted Police intercepted 2,811 asylum seekers crossing the border outside formal land ports of entry, the vast majority crossing into Quebec.</p> <p>In January and February they intercepted 2,382 and 2,164, respectively – compared with 888 and 808 in January and February of 2019.</p> <p>These asylum seekers can enter Canada because they do not enter at formal border crossings. Under the Safe Third Country Agreement – which is set to be contested at Canada’s supreme court – Canada and the United States can turn back asylum seekers in either direction at formal land border crossings.</p> <p>Volunteers who come to the border bearing water bottles or mittens and who try to ensure border-crossers’ rights are respected have resumed their weekly trips to Roxham Road after suspending them during the pandemic, said Frances Ravensbergen, a coordinator for migrant advocacy group Bridges Not Borders.</p>

Some asylum seekers “have kind of waited for the borders to reopen”, Bouchard said.

Roxham Road, north of Plattsburgh, Vermont, is not a formal border crossing, although so many asylum seekers use it that police officers are often stationed there to intercept migrants.

Some would-be refugees were waiting in the United States, others in Latin America or in Kenya until they felt they could make the trip to Canada via the United States, Bouchard said. Canadian refugee claimants come from a range of countries, including Mexico, Colombia, India and Iran.

Many keep abreast of Canada’s shifting regulations, “sometimes with some confusion”, Bouchard said.

But Bouchard thinks there is more than just Canada’s lifted border closure at play. “People are desperate,” he said.

He said the increase was also an indication that “under Joe Biden the (US) immigration policies have not really, really changed,” especially regarding gender-based refugee claims, which are seen as less likely to succeed in the United States.

US apprehensions of migrants crossing from Mexico reached a 20-year high last year, and the Biden administration has been reluctant to roll back all the measures imposed by Donald Trump.

The US government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A Nicaraguan asylum seeker described how he flew into the southern United States, where he was reunited with his wife and children, who had traveled separately. They flew to New York, where they boarded a bus to Plattsburgh in upstate New York and then took a taxi to the Canadian border.

Canadian police were friendly, he said. Now he and his family are living in a Montreal apartment. His kids are in school and he hopes to find work soon.

“It was a hard trip ... everything is in Nicaragua,” he said. “But my mind is positive and I expect that we are going to do well here.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Refugees denied UN rations at Malawi camp</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/refugees-denied-un-aid-rations-at-malawi-camp-dzaleka">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/refugees-denied-un-aid-rations-at-malawi-camp-dzaleka</a>
GIST	<p>Mornings are the worst time for Fayness Alpha. Her children wail from hunger most often when they wake up, she says.</p> <p>Alpha was 15 when she first arrived at Dzaleka – <a href="#">a refugee camp in Dowa</a>, 40km from Malawi’s capital Lilongwe – having been forced from her home in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by bandit attacks. A decade later, she is married with three children. But, like thousands of others, she is unable to find work in the camp or to leave, rendering her dependent on rations provided by the UN’s <a href="#">World Food Programme</a> (WFP).</p> <p>But the WFP – underfunded and facing pressure from other emergencies – “re-evaluated” the needs of the camp’s inhabitants. Alpha was among hundreds who found themselves removed from the list for receiving monthly food supplies. Many say this has left them destitute.</p> <p>“My husband and I are jobless and depend on rations to survive. Ever since we were taken off the list, life has been very hard and we’re just surviving on the grace of God,” says Alpha.</p> <p>“Life is complicated now, and as you can see my children are crying because of hunger. We’re living a difficult and painful life.” She has appealed to WFP staff to reconsider her situation.</p>



The UN conducted a household “vulnerability profiling exercise” of 10,846 refugee and asylum-seeker households in Dzaleka in 2020. Ranking households by income and need, it determined that 678 had found alternative livelihoods, making them food secure. But many of those who found themselves removed say they are baffled as to why.

Dzaleka was established 25 years ago in response to an increase in the number of people fleeing genocide and wars in [Burundi](#), Rwanda and DRC. With an initial capacity for 10,000 people, the camp now houses about 50,000.

Malawi is again seeing new arrivals of people pushed by conflicts, civil unrest and political and economic instability across the region. About 600 people came after being [displaced by Mozambique’s floods](#) in February.

Paul Turnbull, WFP director for [Malawi](#), says the growing number of people in the camp is stretching resources. “In the current economic context, especially with the conflict in Ukraine, funding is very difficult.

“WFP appreciates the support it gets from its funding partners to provide food assistance to refugees in Malawi and elsewhere. The number of refugees in Dzaleka camp has more than doubled since 2013. With limited access to business opportunities, WFP assistance is the primary source of food for most people. Alternative sources of livelihoods in the camp have also been affected by the pandemic,” he says.

More than half of those removed from the list have appealed to the WFP, including Elie Zagabe, 37, who escaped from war in DRC 16 years ago. He enrolled for community learning and eventually found a job helping out in a primary school. But he earns a minimum amount and believes his family’s food rations have been taken away because of a mistake.

“I lost my position [on the list] because the two children are seriously sick. Last two weeks, the second-born was very sick and admitted at Dowa clinic with pneumonia. I think this is because of the cold here at the camp. I was with the child at the hospital while my wife was taking care of the other child at home.

“The people who were doing the survey didn’t approach me. I found them at my neighbour’s place and I told them to reach my home but they said since they had seen me we could interact right there.” He says others he knows on the same salary have stayed on the list, and his attempt to appeal against the decision has been in vain.

“I’m living in a desperate situation. We sometimes spend the night without food. My children cry of hunger and I have nowhere to turn to. We might die of hunger,” he says.

Of the 325 households who appealed, WFP says 103 are eligible to be “reprofiled” using the same vulnerability questionnaire used in 2020, although this does not guarantee being reinstated on the list.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Day 62 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-62-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-62-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The Russian foreign minister has said deliveries of western weaponry to Ukraine mean Nato is “in essence engaged in war with Russia”.</b> In interviews with Russian media, Sergei Lavrov also warned there remained a “real” danger of a third world war. His Ukrainian counterpart, Dymtro Kuleba, said the comments meant only that Moscow “senses defeat in Ukraine”.</li><li>• <b>Officials from more than 40 countries are to gather at Germany’s Ramstein airbase on Tuesday for US-hosted talks expected to focus on how to arm Kyiv against a Russian onslaught in eastern Ukraine.</b> The US army general, Mark Milley, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, said a key goal of the talks was to synchronise and coordinate security assistance to Kyiv that included heavy weaponry.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ukraine’s foreign minister has urged the UN secretary general, António Guterres, to press <a href="#">Russia</a> for an evacuation of the besieged port of Mariupol when he visits Moscow on Tuesday.</b> In an interview with Associated Press, Kuleba also said he was concerned that by visiting Moscow before travelling to Kyiv, Guterres could be falling into a Kremlin “trap” and be “played around”.</li> <li>• <b>About 15,000 Russian troops have been killed since the start of the invasion, the UK defence secretary, Ben Wallace, has said.</b> Speaking in parliament on Monday afternoon, he added that 2,000 armoured vehicles had been destroyed or captured, including 530 tanks. Russia is believed to have lost more than 60 helicopters and fighter jets.</li> <li>• <b>Wallace also confirmed the UK would be sending a small number of Stormer missile-launching vehicles to Ukraine, and that the overall amount of military aid could rise to £500m.</b> Britain has sent 5,361 NLAWs, 200 Javelins and will provide 250 Starstreak anti-air missiles.</li> <li>• <b>Russia’s foreign ministry said it had expelled 40 German diplomatic staff in a retaliatory move after Berlin expelled the same number of Russian diplomats.</b> The ministry said it took the decision after Germany declared “undesirable” a “significant number” of officials at the Russian embassy in Berlin on 4 April.</li> <li>• <b>A senior Russian diplomat has been quoted as saying a ceasefire in Ukraine would not be “a good option” as Kyiv may use it to “stage provocations”.</b> Dmitry Polyanskiy, Russia’s first deputy permanent representative to the UN, said: “Ukraine is undermining our efforts to open humanitarian corridors so we don’t think a ceasefire is a good option now.”</li> <li>• <b>The Ukrainian defence ministry said the shelling of a government building in Moldova’s breakaway region of Transnistria was a “planned provocation” by Russia.</b> “Obviously, this case is one of a number of provocative measures organised by the FSB [the Russian security service] to instil panic and anti-Ukrainian sentiment,” the ministry’s intelligence department said, according to CNN.</li> <li>• <b>Sweden and Finland have agreed to submit simultaneous membership applications to the US-led Nato alliance as early as mid-May,</b> Nordic media reports. The story was published by the Finnish newspaper Italehti, and Swedish government sources appeared to confirm the news to domestic media.</li> <li>• <b>The United States has launched a web portal that will allow a US-based sponsor to apply for Ukrainian refugees and their immediate family members to stay in the country for up to two years.</b></li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 UK backs Ukraine strikes in Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/apr/26/britain-backs-ukraine-carrying-out-strikes-in-russia-says-minister">https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/apr/26/britain-backs-ukraine-carrying-out-strikes-in-russia-says-minister</a>
GIST	<p>The UK backs Ukrainian troops carrying out strikes in Russian territory, the armed forces minister has said, calling it “not necessarily a problem” if Ukraine uses weapons donated by Britain.</p> <p>James Heappey said the UK believed it was “completely legitimate” for Ukraine to identify targets in Russia in order to disrupt attacks on Ukraine.</p> <p>“Of course we do. The fact is that Ukraine was a sovereign country that was living peacefully within its own borders and then another country decided to violate those borders and bring 130,000 troops across into their country,” he told Times Radio.</p> <p>“That started a war between Ukraine and Russia, and in war Ukraine needs to strike into its opponent’s depth to attack its logistics lines, its fuel supplies, its ammunition depots, and that’s part of it.”</p> <p>He added that it was “completely legitimate for Ukraine to be targeting in Russia’s depth in order to disrupt the logistics that if they weren’t disrupted would directly contribute to death and carnage on Ukrainian soil”.</p>

He said it was “not necessarily a problem” if British-donated weapons were used to hit sites on Russian soil after accepting that weapons allies were supplying to Ukraine had the range to be used over borders.

“There are lots of countries around the world that operate kit that they have imported from other countries. When those bits of kit are used we tend not to blame [the country] that manufactured it, you blame the country that fired it.”

Heapey said there was “every chance” the Ukrainians would be able to repel the Russian forces, a more optimistic tone than struck by Boris Johnson in India last week. The prime minister said that a war of attrition in Ukraine meant Russia could grind out an eventual victory and “the sad thing is that that is a realistic possibility”.

Heapey said that in the east of the country the conflict would be between two forces that were “much more evenly balanced, where the Ukrainians have the advantage of defensive positions that have been dug in and prepared over the last eight years and that’s going to make it an extraordinarily difficult nut for the Russians to crack”.

“And with all the support that the Ukrainians are getting from around the world, there’s every chance the Ukrainians can see them off,” he told Sky.

Speaking earlier on the BBC, Heapey said the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, was determined to claim some kind of victory before the 9 May victory parade, a time pressure he said would force errors by the Russians.

He said commanders would know it was “militarily unsound” to attempt to keep to a set date. “It is absolute folly to launch an offensive before you’ve massed all of your combat power and that they’re giving away whatever advantage they may have won and there’s been incredibly bad weather in the Donbas over the last week or two, which means the ground is not conducive right now to the manoeuvre of heavy army,” Heapey said.

“Putin’s political pressure and the hubris that he’s shown, his desire to stand there on the steps of the Kremlin on 9 May and be a hero, means that thousands of Russian lives are going to be lost and the Russians are going to hand over the numerical advantage that they should have.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Sweden, Finland NATO applications?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/sweden-and-finland-agree-to-submit-nato-applications">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/sweden-and-finland-agree-to-submit-nato-applications</a>
GIST	<p>Sweden and <a href="#">Finland</a> have agreed to submit simultaneous membership applications to the US-led Nato alliance as early as the middle of next month, Nordic media have reported.</p> <p>The Finnish daily <a href="#">Italehti said on Monday</a> that Stockholm had “suggested the two countries indicate their willingness to join” on the same day, and that Helsinki had agreed “as long as the Swedish government has made its decision”.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Swedish newspaper Expressen cited</a> government sources as confirming the report. The two countries’ prime ministers <a href="#">said this month</a> they were deliberating the question, arguing <a href="#">Russia’s invasion of Ukraine had changed Europe’s “whole security landscape”</a> and “dramatically shaped mindsets” in the Nordic region.</p> <p>Finland’s prime minister, Sanna Marin, said then that her country, which shares a 1,300km (810 mile) border with <a href="#">Russia</a>, would decide whether to apply to join the alliance “quite fast, in weeks not months”, despite the risk of infuriating Moscow.</p> <p>Her Swedish counterpart, Magdalena Andersson, said Sweden had to be “prepared for all kinds of actions from Russia” and that “everything had changed” when Moscow attacked Ukraine. <a href="#">Russia</a> has repeatedly warned both countries against the move.</p>

	<p>The Kremlin said it would be forced to “restore military balance” by strengthening its defences in the Baltic, including by deploying nuclear weapons, if the two countries decided to abandon decades of military nonalignment by joining <a href="#">Nato</a>.</p> <p>Sweden’s foreign minister, Ann Linde, said last week a wide-ranging security policy review would be concluded by 13 rather than 31 May as originally planned, adding that with Finland’s analysis already published “there is now a lot of pressure”.</p> <p>Expressen said the simultaneous applications could be submitted in the week of 16 May, coinciding with a state visit to Stockholm by the Finnish president Sauli Niinistö. The Guardian could not independently confirm the reports.</p> <p>Recent opinion polls have shown as many as 68% of Finns are in favour of joining the alliance, more than double the figure before the invasion, with only 12% against. Polling in Sweden suggests a slim majority of Swedes also back membership.</p> <p>Both countries are officially nonaligned militarily, but became Nato partners – taking part in exercises and exchanging intelligence – after abandoning their previous stance of strict neutrality when they joined the EU in 1995 after the end of the cold war.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Judge holds Trump in contempt; sanctions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/judge-holds-donald-trump-in-contempt-imposes-sanctions-for-noncompliance-in-new-york-probe-11650905567?mod=hp_lead_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/judge-holds-donald-trump-in-contempt-imposes-sanctions-for-noncompliance-in-new-york-probe-11650905567?mod=hp_lead_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>A New York judge on Monday held <a href="#">Donald Trump</a> in contempt of court and fined him \$10,000 a day for what he said was the former president’s failure to comply with a subpoena issued by state Attorney General Letitia James for her <a href="#">civil-fraud investigation</a>.</p> <p>New York State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron said Mr. Trump hadn’t complied with an earlier court order to hand over documents requested by a subpoena Ms. James issued in December.</p> <p>Mr. Trump’s lawyers had argued that certain materials requested by Ms. James didn’t exist, but Justice Engoron said they hadn’t provided any admissible evidence that showed they adequately searched for documents sought by the subpoena.</p> <p>“I hereby hold you in civil contempt and fine you \$10,000 a day,” Justice Engoron said after a morning court hearing, before bringing his gavel down with a loud bang. The judge said he would issue a formal written opinion on Tuesday.</p> <p>The contempt dispute is the latest legal battle stemming from Ms. James’s long-running civil-fraud investigation into <a href="#">whether Mr. Trump and his company made false or misleading statements</a> to tax authorities, banks and insurers for financial gain.</p> <p>The sanctions come after the state attorney general has gone to court repeatedly to press the Trump Organization, Mr. Trump and other parties to provide materials and information for her probe.</p> <p>Mr. Trump, a Republican, has denied any impropriety and said the probe by Ms. James, a Democrat, is politically motivated.</p> <p>The judge’s sanctions came in response to a request filed by Ms. James earlier this month, in which she urged Justice Engoron to fine Mr. Trump \$10,000 each day until he complies.</p> <p>“Today, justice prevailed,” Ms. James said. “For years, Donald Trump has tried to evade the law and stop our lawful investigation into him and his company’s financial dealings.”</p>

Alina Habba, a lawyer for Mr. Trump, said she plans to appeal. “All documents responsive to the subpoena were produced to the attorney general months ago,” Ms. Habba said.

During court proceedings Monday, a lawyer for the attorney general said the state could bring a lawsuit in its Trump probe soon. Given a looming timing deadline, “we will likely need to bring some kind of enforcement action in the near future,” the lawyer, Kevin Wallace, said.

Another lawyer for the state said the lack of materials provided by Mr. Trump had hampered New York’s investigation, adding that the Trump Organization had turned over only 10 documents from the former president.

Ms. Habba said in court that she had flown to Florida to meet with the former president, who didn’t have documents to hand over.

“President Trump does not email,” Ms. Habba said. “He does not text message. And he has no work computer at home or anywhere else.”

Ms. James has subpoenaed Mr. Trump and two of his adult children, Ivanka Trump and Donald Trump Jr., to testify under oath, in addition to requesting documents from the former president.

Justice Engoron previously denied the Trumps’ move to block or delay the subpoenas, a ruling they have appealed. The attorney general [agreed to delay the depositions](#) during the pending appeal, while Mr. Trump agreed to hand over documents by the end of March.

The judge on Monday also ordered global real-estate firm [Cushman & Wakefield](#) to comply with related subpoenas it received in Ms. James’s probe, giving it until May 27 to turn over additional materials. The subpoenas at issue seek hundreds of appraisal documents from 2012 to 2017.

Cushman & Wakefield appraised several Trump-owned properties, including the Seven Springs Estate, Trump National Golf Club Los Angeles and 40 Wall St., but ended its business relationship with Mr. Trump and his company last year.

Cushman argued the subpoenas were too broad.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 SKorea downgrades Covid-19 category</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korea-downgrades-covid-19-from-riskiest-disease-category-11650885199?mod=hp_listb_pos4">https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korea-downgrades-covid-19-from-riskiest-disease-category-11650885199?mod=hp_listb_pos4</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL—South Korea has downgraded Covid-19 from the country’s riskiest category of infectious disease, a first step toward treating the virus more like the seasonal flu.</p> <p>The country is one of the first to make such a move. The downgrade, approved Monday by health officials, will take effect after a four-week transition period.</p> <p>Once it does, South Koreans who test positive will no longer be required to go into quarantine, which currently lasts seven days by law. Doctors will no longer need to report a positive case immediately, as <a href="#">infection-tracking diminishes in importance</a>. Those showing symptoms will be able to get treatment at local clinics rather than solely at hospitals, due to the reduced fears of virus spread.</p> <p>And the national healthcare system will no longer pay in full for treatment. People with Covid, like people with many other ailments, will have to cover some medication costs and hospital fees themselves. Vaccines will remain free.</p>

The downgrade decision follows the country's largest outbreak. Since January, roughly one in three South Koreans have been infected, with daily per capita cases hitting a peak last month that far exceeded the worst outbreaks in the U.S. or U.K. Omicron's impact was blunted by one of the world's highest vaccination rates, with 96% of adults having received two doses. Deaths remained relatively low.

The country had all but given up trying to thwart outbreaks. It stopped widespread testing and halted contact tracing—pillars of South Korea's early Covid-19 success, which [won it praise globally](#). Some health officials even suggested a mass outbreak was necessary to spur the shift toward a strategy of treating it as endemic, meaning a disease that [circulates among the population more predictably](#).

"Covid-19 won't be eliminated but we are at a point where we can take a chance at returning to normality," Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol said at a briefing this month where the downgrade was discussed.

Some local health experts have called the downgrade premature. The transition team for [President-elect](#) Yoon Suk-yeol, who has been critical of the current administration's Covid-19 restrictions, has called the decision a "hasty approach."

South Korean officials have said they could reinstate social-distancing measures should a new variant emerge or infections surge dramatically again.

"Even as the government pushes for a return to normal, we will prepare thoroughly under the assumption that the risk can return," Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum said this month.

South Korea classified Covid-19 at Level 1—the top of its four-level scale, along with the likes of Ebola and SARS—in February 2020, the classification's first new entry since the H1N1 flu more than a decade earlier. That level requires cases to be immediately reported to health authorities and patients to be isolated, and gives authorities the power to order testing or start contact tracing.

Covid will now be downgraded to Level 2, putting it on par with chickenpox or measles. The seasonal flu is categorized at the lowest level.

Infections peaked in March at more than 600,000 daily cases, but the death rate is one of the lowest in the world—0.13%, or about one-tenth that of the U.S. and U.K. In recent weeks, daily cases have dropped even as virus restrictions have been lifted. Monday's count was around 30,000, the lowest in more than two months.

South Korean officials have also laid out a "post-Omicron" scheme, lifting all distancing restrictions other than the mask mandate. Restaurants and cafes can operate without a curfew. People are allowed to gather in any number. Eating inside movie theaters is allowed again.

International travelers are exempt from the seven-day quarantine if they are vaccinated, and need merely to submit a negative test upon arrival. More international flights will resume, lifting the cap on arrivals at the country's main international airport. Public-health centers will focus on testing high-risk groups rather than the general population.

"Downgrading the virus threat level is the final step in transitioning to treating the disease as endemic," said Lee Wang-jun, chairman of the Myongji Hospital in Goyang, a city just outside Seoul.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Israel responds to attack: strikes Lebanon</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-strikes-lebanon-in-response-to-rocket-attack-11650876064?mod=hp_listb_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-strikes-lebanon-in-response-to-rocket-attack-11650876064?mod=hp_listb_pos3</a>
GIST	TEL AVIV—Israel fired artillery shells into southern Lebanon after militants there launched a rocket into northern Israel, the Israeli military said, opening a new front in current Israeli-Palestinian tensions.



The Israeli military said the rocket landed in an open area near a small kibbutz, causing no injuries. The military said that in response, it targeted the source of the launch and an unspecified infrastructure with artillery fire early Monday. No group claimed responsibility for the attack and no injuries were reported in Lebanon.

Israeli officials said they believed that a faction of Palestinian militants based in Lebanon launched the rocket, but couldn't be certain. Israel says a number of Palestinian militant groups operate in southern Lebanon, where the powerful Lebanese militant and political group Hezbollah has tight control.

Ran Kochav, an Israeli military spokesman, said the rocket fire from Lebanon was likely related to flare up in conflict across Israel and the Palestinian territories.

In recent weeks, Israeli police and Palestinians have clashed in Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site, the [compound around Al Aqsa Mosque](#), which Muslims call the Noble Sanctuary and Jews the Temple Mount.

In addition, Palestinian and Arab Israelis have carried out a string of terror attacks inside Israel, there were deadly clashes in the West Bank and Gaza-based militants fired rockets at Israel on three occasions.

Gaza's ruling faction, Hamas, and other militant groups in the Gaza strip have been [threatening to attack Israel](#) over near-daily clashes last week between Israeli police and Palestinians at Al Aqsa Mosque compound. No group has claimed responsibility for the [recent rocket fire from Gaza](#) into Israel.

There hasn't been this much violence between Israelis and Palestinians since Hamas and Israel fought an 11-day deadly conflict in May that was also sparked by tensions in Jerusalem.

During that conflict, Palestinian militants fired four rockets at northern Israel, according to Israel's military.

Mr. Kochav said Israel's artillery fire into southern Lebanon was a message to those Palestinian groups and Hezbollah that "we won't allow Israeli sovereignty to be violated."

Israel and Hezbollah last fought a war in 2006 after two Israeli soldiers were captured in a cross-border raid. Israel launched a massive assault on Lebanon in response, which saw Hezbollah fire thousands of rockets at northern Israel. The 34-day war resulted in the deaths of 165 Israeli soldiers and civilians and at least 1,100 people were killed in Lebanon, mostly civilians but also Hezbollah fighters.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Turkey political prisoner jailed for life</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/erdogan-critic-given-life-sentence-in-ruling-likely-to-stoke-tensions-with-west-11650904728?mod=hp_listb_pos5">https://www.wsj.com/articles/erdogan-critic-given-life-sentence-in-ruling-likely-to-stoke-tensions-with-west-11650904728?mod=hp_listb_pos5</a>
GIST	<p>ISTANBUL—A Turkish court sentenced one of the country's most famous political prisoners to life in prison Monday on charges of attempting to overthrow the government in a trial that has come to symbolize the erosion of the rule of law in Turkey.</p> <p>The conviction of businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala is likely to deepen tensions between the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Western states that have pressured Ankara to release Mr. Kavala since his detention in 2017.</p> <p>Wearing a white collared shirt and glasses, he spoke to a crowded Istanbul courtroom via videolink from prison on Monday. He said prosecutors' demand for a life sentence was "an act of assassination by the hand of judiciary."</p>



After a judge read out verdicts for Mr. Kavala and seven co-defendants, the courtroom erupted in chants including, “Long live freedom, down with tyranny.”

Authorities detained Mr. Kavala at an Istanbul airport in 2017 and held him for over two years before indicting him on charges of attempting to overthrow the government and other allegations.

In Mr. Kavala’s subsequent trial, prosecutors have accused him of being at the heart of a conspiracy to overthrow the Turkish government, alleging that he provided financial support for protests that occurred in 2013.

Mr. Kavala denies the charges against him. Some observers of the trial, including human rights advocates, say the proceedings are a sham and part of a government attempt to chill freedom of speech in Turkey. A judge on Turkey’s constitutional court called Mr. Kavala’s detention “Kafkaesque” in a written explanation of a previous ruling.

Mr. Erdogan, a democratically elected populist, has expanded the use of arbitrary detention to clamp down on political opponents since the 2013 protests, rights advocates say. The crackdown intensified after the Turkish president survived a military coup attempt in 2016, observers say.

Mr. Erdogan has also accused Mr. Kavala of “financing terrorists” in the 2013 protests and accused Mr. Kavala of being part of a foreign plot against Turkey backed by philanthropist George Soros, whom the Turkish president called “the famous Hungarian Jew.”

Mr. Kavala has rejected the accusations against himself and Mr. Soros.

“The allegation that the Gezi Park events were financed by George Soros is a malicious fictional scenario aiming to discredit the actions of those who participated in the protests,” he told the court earlier in April, referring to the 2013 demonstrations.

The trial has generated tension between Mr. Erdogan’s government and Western powers. Ten Western countries including the U.S., France and Germany called for Mr. Kavala’s release last year, prompting Mr. Erdogan to [threaten to expel those nations’ ambassadors](#).

In December 2019, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Turkish authorities had violated Mr. Kavala’s rights by keeping him detained and called for his release. Turkey has resisted international pressure to free him.

“We don’t care so much about what the European Court of Human Rights says or what the council of Europe says. We respect our own courts,” Mr. Erdogan said earlier this year.

In addition to Mr. Kavala, the judge handed prison sentences to several co-defendants including Mucella Yapici, a board member of the Istanbul Chamber of Architects who is in her 70s. Ms. Yapici had participated in the protests and was sentenced to 18 years in prison. She was seen raising a fist in defiance before all seven were placed under arrest.

Mr. Kavala’s case reflects the erosion of civil rights and democratic institutions during Mr. Erdogan’s nearly two decades in power in Turkey, observers of the trial say.

“This whole process has further discredited Turkey’s reputation internationally,” said Emma Sinclair-Webb, a senior Turkey researcher with Human Rights Watch. “This case has come to epitomize the crisis of rule of law.”

A Turkish court in 2020 acquitted Mr. Kavala and several co-defendants on the initial charges. He was then [detained on a new set of charges](#) including attempting to “overthrow the constitutional order” and espionage.

	<p>Mr. Kavala was acquitted on the espionage charge on Monday. The verdicts can be appealed.</p> <p>Hundreds of thousands of people joined the 2013 demonstrations, known as the Gezi Park protests, which began with a sit-in by environmentalists against a government plan to build a replica of an Ottoman-era barracks in a park in central Istanbul. The demonstrations evolved into a broader challenge to the government after police used water cannons, gunfire and beatings to disperse protesters, according to human rights groups.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Russia oil depots near Ukraine on fire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/world/europe/russian-oil-facility-fire-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/world/europe/russian-oil-facility-fire-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>Large fires tore through oil depots on Monday in Bryansk, a Russian city less than 100 miles from the Ukrainian border that is a key logistical hub in Russia's war effort.</p> <p>Russian officials said they were investigating the cause. The fires took place on the same day that Russian forces targeted critical infrastructure across Ukraine.</p> <p>Russian state television reported two separate explosions. One was at a civilian oil storage facility — part of a pipeline that links Russian oil fields with Europe — and the other was at a military oil depot. One blaze engulfed an oil tank that held 10,000 tons of diesel fuel, state television reported; the other contained 5,000 tons of diesel.</p> <p>Russia has accused Ukraine of conducting several attacks on border crossing points and other facilities inside the country.</p> <p><a href="#">Videos</a> from the <a href="#">scene</a> in Bryansk, corroborated by the news agency Storyful, showed giant plumes of smoke billowing from two separate fires, about a mile away from each other.</p> <p>Aleksandr Bogomaz, the governor of Bryansk region, <a href="#">confirmed</a> only the fire at the civilian oil depot. The military facility with oil tanks next door <a href="#">was described</a> by a local state-run job search website as a warehouse for missile and other fuel.</p> <p>No injuries were reported, according to the Russian emergency situations ministry, which dispatched firefighters and rescue services to the scene, the Russian news agency Tass reported. Russian investigators <a href="#">launched</a> an inquiry into the incident.</p> <p>The fires in Bryansk followed a string of similar incidents in Russian regions bordering Ukraine.</p> <p>In early April <a href="#">two Ukrainian helicopters struck an oil depot in Belgorod</a>, less than 20 miles from the Ukrainian border, the first such strike in Russian territory to be made public since the start of the war more than two months ago. Russian officials also accused Ukraine of an attack that hit residential buildings in Bryansk two weeks ago. Ukraine's defense ministry, which has generally declined to discuss reports of attacks on Russian soil, had no immediate comment on Monday.</p> <p>The fires on Monday occurred hours after two senior American officials, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III, met with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine in Kyiv, the capital, in the highest-level visit by American officials to Ukraine since the start of the war.</p> <p>Russian forces continued to attack critical infrastructure across Ukraine on Monday, including missile strikes that hit at least five railway stations, according to the Ukrainian authorities.</p> <p>In addition to the blazes that tore through the Russian oil depots near the Ukrainian border, several fires have been reported further inside Russia. Seventeen people died after a fire on Thursday at a key aerospace defense research institute in the town of Tver, north of Moscow, local authorities said. Russian officials</p>

	also reported another fire on Thursday at a major chemical factory in the Ivanovo region, 200 miles northeast of Moscow.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Russia accuses NATO of 'proxy war'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/russia-accuses-nato-of-proxy-war-in-ukraine-as-us-hosts-crucial-defence-summit">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/russia-accuses-nato-of-proxy-war-in-ukraine-as-us-hosts-crucial-defence-summit</a>
GIST	<p>Russia's foreign minister has accused Nato of fighting a proxy war by supplying military aid to Ukraine, as defence ministers gathered in <a href="#">Germany</a> for US-hosted talks on supporting Ukraine through what one US general called a "very critical" few weeks.</p> <p>Sergei Lavrov told Russian state media: "Nato, in essence, is engaged in a war with <a href="#">Russia</a> through a proxy and is arming that proxy. War means war."</p> <p>He also warned that the risks of nuclear conflict were now "considerable" – a claim Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, <a href="#">said</a> showed Moscow had lost its "last hope to scare the world off supporting Ukraine".</p> <p>When asked about the importance of avoiding a third world war, Lavrov said: "I would not want to elevate those risks artificially. Many would like that. The danger is serious, real. And we must not underestimate it."</p> <p>Western officials have become concerned by the <a href="#">increasing emphasis Moscow puts on its nuclear arsenal</a> as its conventional forces have faltered in Ukraine, hampered by fierce resistance and its own logistical and technological problems.</p> <p>The US talks, hosted in <a href="#">Germany</a> by US defence secretary Lloyd Austin, are expected to see more than 40 countries and the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, gather at Ramstein airbase south-west of Frankfurt. General Mark Milley, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, said a key goal of the talks was to coordinate mounting security assistance to Kyiv that included heavy weaponry, such as howitzers, as well armed drones and ammunition.</p> <p>"The next several weeks will be very, very critical," Milley said. "They need continued support in order to be successful on the battlefield. And that's really the purpose of this conference."</p> <p>Austin, speaking <a href="#">after his trip to Ukraine</a>, said: "They [Ukraine] can win if they have the right equipment, the right support."</p> <p>US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, assess that Russia will now rely heavily on artillery strikes, trying to pound Ukrainian positions as Moscow moves in ground forces from multiple directions to try to envelop and wipe out a significant chunk of Ukraine's military.</p> <p>But the US also estimates many Russian units are depleted, with some operating with personnel losses as high as 30% – a level considered by the US military to be too high to keep fighting, officials say.</p> <p>Britain's defence secretary, Ben Wallace, told parliament on Monday about 15,000 Russian troops had been killed since the start of the invasion on 24 February; 2,000 Russian armoured vehicles had been destroyed or captured, including 530 tanks; and more than 60 Russian helicopters and fighter jets had been lost.</p> <p>Ukraine's foreign minister on Monday urged the UN secretary general, António Guterres, to press Russia for an evacuation of the besieged port of Mariupol, and criticised the decision by Guterres to visit Moscow first on Tuesday, before travelling to Kyiv.</p>

	<p>“Many other foreign officials were trapped visiting Moscow and played around just to show the supremacy of Russian diplomacy and how great they are and how they dictate the world how to behave,” Kuleba said.</p> <p>Guterres “should focus primarily on one issue: evacuation of Mariupol”, Kuleba said, referring to the southern port city where an estimated 100,000 people are trapped while Ukrainian fighters holed up in a steelworks resist Russian forces. “This is really something that the UN is capable to do. And if he [Guterres] demonstrates political will, character and integrity, I hope that will allow us to make one step forward.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Russia bombs Ukraine railway stations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/russia-bombs-five-rail-stations-in-central-and-western-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/russia-bombs-five-rail-stations-in-central-and-western-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>Five railway stations in central and western <a href="#">Ukraine</a> were hit by Russian airstrikes in the space of an hour on Monday, as the war ground on relentlessly in the south and east of the country.</p> <p>Oleksander Kamyshin, the head of Ukrainian Railways, said five train stations came under fire, causing an unspecified number of casualties, as most of Ukraine was placed under an unusually long air raid warning for two hours on Monday morning.</p> <p>Kamyshin said one of the attacks took place at about 8.30am in Krasne, near Lviv in western Ukraine, at what the governor of the region described as a “traction substation” that handled power supply to other lines. He said emergency workers were at the scene.</p> <p>Maksym Kozytskyi, the head of the regional government in Lviv, said that during the attack Ukrainian anti-aircraft systems destroyed another missile fired at the region.</p> <p>Ukraine’s military command said <a href="#">Russia</a> was trying to bomb rail infrastructure to disrupt arms supplies from foreign countries. “They are trying to destroy the supply routes of military-technical assistance from partner states. To do this, they focus strikes on railway junctions,” it wrote in a Facebook post.</p> <p>Russia’s defence ministry said it had destroyed six railway facilities used to supply Ukrainian forces with foreign weapons.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a government building in Moldova’s breakaway region of Transnistria was shelled from a hand grenade launcher on Monday, the press service of the Russian-backed unrecognised state said on its Telegram channel.</p> <p>According to Transnistrian officials, a building belonging to the ministry of state security was hit in the region’s capital, Tiraspol, on Monday evening. There were no immediate reports of injuries.</p> <p>A number of images circulating on social media appeared to show smoke coming out of broken windows of the government building. It was not immediately clear who was behind the apparent attack.</p> <p>Last week a senior Russian commander said the goal of Russia’s new offensive was to seize control of southern Ukraine and to gain access to Transnistria, which lies on the southern Ukrainian border.</p> <p>While military experts have said it was unlikely that Russian forces would be able to stage an offensive towards the border with Moldova at this moment, the statements nevertheless raised fears in Moldova over Russia’s intentions.</p> <p>With Moscow’s support, Transnistria fought a war against Moldova in the 1990s that left the territory with de facto independence and a garrison of about 1,500 Russian troops.</p>

If confirmed to be linked to the war, it would be the first spillover of the conflict into another European country.

The train station attacks in Ukraine were not the first of the war. On 8 April in Kramatorsk, in eastern Ukraine, two ballistic missiles exploded over the railway station building, dropping deadly cluster munitions that killed 59 people and injured hundreds more.

On Sunday Russian missile strikes on an oil refinery and power plant in Kremenchuk killed one person and wounded seven, according to officials. Moscow said it had destroyed oil production facilities there. Serhiy Borzov, the governor of the Vinnytsia region in central Ukraine, said Moscow fired rockets at two towns, causing an unspecified number of deaths and injuries.

Russian shelling and assaults continued on Monday along most of the front in the east, including missile and bomb attacks on a huge steelworks in Mariupol where 1,000 civilians are holed up along with about 2,000 Ukrainian fighters.

Serhiy Volyna, the commander of Ukraine's 36th marine brigade forces in Mariupol, said in an interview with an opposition lawmaker posted on YouTube on Sunday that Russia was targeting the complex with air and artillery bombardments.

"We are taking casualties, the situation is critical ... we have very many wounded men, [some] are dying, it's a difficult [situation] with guns, ammunition, food, medicines ... the situation is rapidly worsening," Volyna said, speaking from the plant.

The Russian defence ministry said it was opening a humanitarian corridor at 2pm (11am GMT) on Monday for all civilians to leave the besieged plant.

"The armed forces of the Russian Federation and the formations of the Donetsk people's republic from 2pm Moscow time on 25 April 2022 unilaterally cease any hostilities, units are withdrawn to a safe distance and ensure the withdrawal of the specified category of citizens in any directions they choose," the defence ministry said in a statement posted on its Facebook page.

Ukrainian officials have accused Russia of not holding fire during previous attempts to establish humanitarian routes out of the city.

The Russian defence ministry on Monday repeated its claims that "nationalists" were holding civilians hostages as "human shields" at the Azovstal plant. It said: "If civilians are still at the metallurgical plant, then we demand that the Kyiv authorities immediately give the appropriate order to the commanders of nationalist formations for their release."

The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, have returned to Poland after a visit to Kyiv, the highest-level US visit to the capital since Russia invaded in February.

During talks, Blinken and Austin told Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, that the US would provide more than \$300m (£235m) in military financing and had approved a \$165m sale of ammunition, bringing total US security assistance since the invasion to about \$3.7bn. More than \$400m will also be split among 15 other nations in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans.

Russia told the US to stop sending arms to Ukraine, with Moscow's ambassador to Washington warning that large western deliveries of weapons were inflaming the conflict and would lead to more losses.

Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador to the US, said such arms deliveries were aimed at weakening Russia but that they were escalating the conflict in Ukraine while undermining efforts to reach some sort of peace agreement.

	<p>“What the Americans are doing is pouring oil on the flames,” Antonov told the Rossiya 24 TV channel. “I see only an attempt to raise the stakes, to aggravate the situation, to see more losses.”</p> <p>Antonov, who has served as ambassador to Washington since 2017, said an official diplomatic note had been sent to Washington expressing Russia’s concerns. No reply had been given, he said.</p> <p>“We stressed the unacceptability of this situation when the United States of America pours weapons into Ukraine, and we demanded an end to this practice,” Antonov said. The interview was replayed on Russian state television throughout Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Truck convoy egged out of neighborhood</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/25/california-trucker-protest-egged">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/25/california-trucker-protest-egged</a>
GIST	<p>A convoy of trucks that had gathered outside a <a href="#">California</a> lawmaker’s house over the weekend to protest her support of an abortion rights bill was forced to leave the area after crossing paths with a group of young people armed with eggs.</p> <p>The <a href="#">people’s convoy</a>, inspired by Canadian truckers who shut down roads to protest vaccine mandates, arrived in the Bay Area last week after weeks of demonstrations in <a href="#">Washington</a> DC.</p> <p>On Friday, about 20 drivers filled the road near the home of Buffy Wicks, a Democratic assemblymember, honking, and using bullhorns to demand she leave her home. The group was reportedly protesting legislation Wicks wrote that would end coroner investigations of stillbirths, the <a href="#">San Francisco Chronicle</a> reported, and require state businesses to mandate Covid vaccines for their employees.</p> <p>The convoy, however, drew fierce opposition from neighbors, who told the drivers to leave the residential street, <a href="#">SF Gate</a> reported. Wicks called law enforcement for protection, and the trucks dispersed when police responded to the scene.</p> <p>When the convoy got stuck in traffic outside an Oakland Safeway, however, a group of residents began throwing eggs at the stalled vehicles, shouting “get the **** out of here”, according to <a href="#">video</a> of the incident. Passersby partook as well, grabbing eggs and tossing them at trucks scrawled with phrases such as “Let’s go Brandon”, a coded term among Trump supporters to insult Joe Biden, as they drove by. Many of those throwing eggs at the group were kids who cheered each other on and then fled after running out of eggs.</p> <p>Some jumped out of their vehicles and engaged in heated confrontations with those throwing eggs. “We’re fighting for your freedoms too,” a protester yelled at the kids, the SF Gate reported.</p> <p>The group fled back to their base in Sacramento, <a href="#">complaining</a> about their icy reception and dirty vehicles.</p> <p>“Bullhorns and loud trucks lend no legitimacy to baseless conspiracy theories from out of state protesters,” Erin Ivie, a spokesperson for Wicks’ office, told the <a href="#">Mercury News</a>. “Wicks will not indulge any attempts to influence her legislative work through harassment and intimidation tactics – especially when it’s directed at her home and her family.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 US warns against China base Pacific</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/us-wont-rule-out-military-action-if-china-establishes-base-in-solomon-islands">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/us-wont-rule-out-military-action-if-china-establishes-base-in-solomon-islands</a>
GIST	One of the most senior US officials in the Pacific has refused to rule out military action against <a href="#">Solomon Islands</a> if it were to allow China to establish a military base there, saying that the security deal between the countries presented “potential regional security implications” for the US and other allies.



Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, was part of a high-level US delegation to the Pacific country last week.

He said the US team, which also included the National Security Council coordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs, Kurt Campbell, had a 90-minute “constructive and candid” meeting with prime minister Manasseh Sogavare in which the US team detailed concerns about its recently signed security deal with [China](#).

“We wanted to outline for our friends in the Solomons, what our concerns are,” said Kritenbrink. “Prime minister Sogavare indicated that in the Solomon Islands’ view, the agreement they’ve concluded has solely domestic implications. But we’ve made clear that there are potential regional security implications of the agreement not just for ourselves, but for allies and partners across the region.”

On Tuesday, Kritenbrink reiterated the US’s willingness to act in the region if a military base were established by China.

“Of course, we have respect for the Solomon Islands sovereignty, but we also wanted to let them know that if steps were taken to establish a de facto permanent military presence, power projection capabilities, or a military installation, then we would have significant concerns, and we would very naturally respond to those concerns,” he said.

When asked what that response could involve, he said: “Look, I’m not going to speculate and I’m not in a position to talk about what the United States may or may not do in such a situation.”

Pressed on whether he would rule out the prospect of the US taking military action against Solomon Islands were a naval base to be established, and, if not, whether he was comfortable with Australian prime minister Scott Morrison’s talk of the base being a “red line” for Australia, he said: “I don’t have a lot to add beyond what I’ve already stated.”

In a statement last week, the Biden administration said the US would “respond accordingly” if China was allowed to establish a long-term presence on the islands, while noting assurances from Sogavare that he had no intention of allowing a military base.

The rhetoric escalated in the wake of the statement, with the Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, saying Australia had “the same red line” as the US when it came to China’s involvement in Solomon Islands, and defence minister Peter Dutton using his Anzac Day address on Monday to declare: “Australia should prepare for war”, claiming that China was “on a very deliberate course at the moment”.

Kritenbrink also noted China’s military ambitions, saying: “I think it’s important in this context, to keep in mind that we do know that the PRC [People’s Republic of China] is seeking to establish a more robust overseas logistics and basic infrastructure that would allow the PLA [People’s Liberation Army] to project and sustain military power at greater distances. So we wanted to have that candid conversation with our friends in the Solomons. We outlined our concerns ... and we’ve indicated that we’ll continue to monitor the situation closely and continue to engage with them going forward.”

The text of the security deal which was signed by China and Solomon Islands is secret, though Solomon Islands MPs have called for the prime minister to release it publicly.

“I think it’s clear that only a handful of people in a very small circle have seen this agreement. And the prime minister himself has been quoted publicly as saying he would only share the details with China’s permission, which I think is a source of concern as well,” said Kritenbrink.

However, a draft of the deal was leaked on social media last month and contained provisions permitting China to “make ship visits to, carry out logistical replenishment in, and have stopover and transition in Solomon Islands”.



	Kritenbrink said that “the United States of America is not in the business of asking countries to choose between the United States and China or anyone else”. But that it is interested in promoting “a proactive vision for again the shared interests and principles that we believe are vital to all of our friends across the region”.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 FAA: YouTuber deliberately crashed plane</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/apr/26/youtuber-deliberately-crashed-plane-for-views-faa">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/apr/26/youtuber-deliberately-crashed-plane-for-views-faa</a>
GIST	<p>The US Federal Aviation Administration has revoked a YouTuber’s pilot license after it concluded that he intentionally crashed his plane for the sake of gaining online views.</p> <p>On 24 November 2021, Trevor Jacob was flying over California’s Los Padres national forest in his small single-engine plane when his propeller stopped working.</p> <p>“I’m over the mountains and I ... have an engine out,” Jacob said into his camera while sitting in the cockpit. He then proceeded to jump out of the plane, filming himself using a selfie stick before landing with his parachute into an open field.</p> <p>Jacob filmed the whole incident and uploaded it to YouTube in a <a href="#">video</a> titled I Crashed My Plane. Since being posted online in December, the video has racked up 2.2m views.</p> <p>In the video, the empty plane is shown speeding towards the mountains before crashing into the wilderness.</p> <p>On 11 April the Federal Aviation Administration concluded its investigation into the incident and determined that Jacob had crashed his 1940 Taylorcraft BL-65 as a stunt, saying, “On November 24, 2021, you demonstrated a lack of care, judgment, and responsibility by choosing to jump out of an aircraft solely so you could record the footage of the crash.”</p> <p>The FAA justified its conclusion by pointing out the fact that Jacob had attached multiple cameras to the outside of his plane, including a camera pointed in the direction of the propeller “in order to record video footage of the outside and inside of the plane during the flight.”</p> <p>Other pieces of evidence the FAA cited included the sport parachute backpack container that Jacob put on before the flight, his opening the left side pilot door before claiming that the engine had failed, his failure to contact air traffic control on the emergency frequency before jumping out the plane and his lack of attempts to restart the engine by increasing airflow over the propeller.</p> <p>The FAA also said that Jacob did not make any attempts to search for safe areas to land, even though “there were multiple within gliding range” in which he could have made a safe landing, and that he jumped out of the plane while holding a camera attached to a selfie stick and continued to record the plane during his descent.</p> <p>Additionally, the agency found that Jacob had recovered then disposed of the plane wreckage, as well as recovered the cameras that he had attached to the plane before the flight.</p> <p>As a result of its findings, the FAA has revoked Jacob’s pilot license and informed him in a six-page letter that if “you fail to surrender your certificates immediately, you will be subject to further legal enforcement action, including a civil penalty of up to \$1,644.00, for each day you fail to surrender it”.</p> <p>In response to the letter, Jacob posted a video on YouTube on Saturday, saying, “I didn’t think that just posting a video of an adventure gone south would ruffle so many feathers.”</p>

	<p>“The aviation community has been pretty tough on me, so I’m thinking about quitting altogether and giving up, just because I’m hated,” he added, while filming himself on his way to the post office to mail his pilot’s license.</p> <p>According to the letter, Jacob is not allowed to reapply for his pilot license for a year.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Report: free media Hong Kong dismantled</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/free-media-in-hong-kong-almost-completely-dismantled-report">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/free-media-in-hong-kong-almost-completely-dismantled-report</a>
GIST	<p>Free media in <a href="#">Hong Kong</a> has been almost completely dismantled by the government crackdown, clearing the market for an expanded pro-Beijing and state-owned media sector, a new report has said.</p> <p>The report, by UK-based advocacy group Hong Kong Watch, came shortly after Hong Kong’s Foreign Correspondent’s Club announced it was <a href="#">suspending its Human Rights Press Awards</a> because it did not want to unintentionally violate the city’s wide-ranging national security law imposed in 2020 by Beijing.</p> <p>The working environment for local and foreign journalists in Hong Kong has become increasingly difficult, the report said, detailing the widespread use of “lawfare” against journalists – including with the national security law – acts of intimidation and police violence, mass sackings, and government intervention or censorship of outlets. It noted the redefinition by police of who constituted a journalist, the pending introduction of a fake news law, and the criminalising of traditional research methods.</p> <p>Since the 2019 pro-democracy protests, a crackdown has seen <a href="#">the closure of Apple Daily</a>, Stand News and others. Sources and citizens now fear retribution or legal consequences for speaking to journalists. A government intervention into RTHK has <a href="#">stripped the public broadcaster of its former editorial independence</a>, and a <a href="#">chilling effect has spread</a> across remaining media, with some engaging in alarming self-censorship.</p> <p>In one example, Chris Wong – a former news presenter with the TVB broadcaster – described to Hong Kong Watch his attempts to report on the November 2019 attack on pro-democracy councillor Andrew Chiu, whose ear was bitten off. The attack was evidenced by clear photographs and video, the report noted.</p> <p>“The script that the editor provided said that Mr Chiu’s ear fell off naturally, somehow,” Wong said. “Nobody did anything, it was not a bite, and the ear just fell to the floor. The editors did not want to cover violence by pro-Beijing ‘blue’ supporters.”</p> <p>Wong also said they were ordered to call protesters “black shirts” and to not cover their press conferences, while running those by the police in full.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, TVB damaged the reputation of its journalists, and because of TVB’s reputation, all former employees are living and working under a lot of public criticism.”</p> <p>The report also detailed multiple acts of police violence against journalists during the protests, including some which appeared targeted.</p> <p>“We were sitting on the ground, and we had taken off our gear, our masks and helmets and other protective gear,” a South China Morning Post photojournalist said of covering one protest. “The police came and sprayed teargas directly at us. The hatred that the police showed against the media was shocking.”</p> <p>The silencing and intimidation of Hong Kong’s media scene had been helped by pro-Beijing outlets which now benefited from the reduced industry, the report suggested.</p>

“In the absence of pro-democracy media, it is worth pausing here to consider the implications of the erosion of press freedom and how it creates further space for the pro-Beijing media,” the report said, accusing the outlets of “providing propaganda for the Chinese Communist party regime and the Hong Kong government, and threatening their critics, both in print and through various forms of harassment.”

“I think we have seen an emboldening of them,” said Hong Kong Watch director, Benedict Rogers, noting recent moves by Ta Kung Pao to devote entire pages to attacking the church, church-run schools, Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen, and Hong Kong Watch.

“That struck me as a kind of escalation and emboldening. They’ve always from time to time gone after people like me and people in Hong Kong but I’ve never seen full page spreads.”

The report also noted the claims of former Stand News editor and [chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, Ronson Chan](#), that he was tailed by a Ta Kung Pao reporter before the paper published a front page story accusing him of visiting a sex worker. In March 2020 Ta Kung Pao published a list of artists and arts organisations it said were linked to anti-government activists, including the [artist Kacey Wong who later fled to Taiwan](#).

The report also accused the papers of publishing “propaganda” including descriptions of the 2021 vote for the legislative council, as “the most successful since handover” despite a [historically low voter turnout of about 30%](#).

The general public for now can still get news from remaining free media and international outlets, Rogers said, “but in terms of Chinese language local media they really have a much much narrower choice and the danger then is they’re getting info filtered through the lens of Beijing’s propaganda.”

In the report Hong Kong Watch called for international governments to offer pathways and assistance to fleeing Hong Kong journalists who want to emigrate, and to continue Cantonese language media from overseas. It also called for governments to use Magnitsky-style sanctions and other forms of pressure to encourage the Hong Kong government to restore media freedoms.

“The international community must not allow those responsible for these violations to get away with impunity and without consequence,” it said.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 WTA will not return to China in 2022</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/apr/26/wta-will-not-return-to-china-in-2022-as-resolution-to-peng-shuai-case-sought">https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/apr/26/wta-will-not-return-to-china-in-2022-as-resolution-to-peng-shuai-case-sought</a>
GIST	<p>The WTA is still working to find a resolution to the standoff with China over the Peng Shuai issue but will not return to the country this year, Tour chief Steve Simon said.</p> <p>The former doubles world No 1’s wellbeing became a concern for the WTA after she posted a message on social media last November apparently accusing China’s former vice-premier Zhang Gaoli of coercing her into sex in the past. Peng later said her post had been misunderstood.</p> <p>The post was subsequently removed and Peng disappeared from public view for three weeks. The following month, the WTA suspended all of its tournaments in China, a decision expected to cost the elite women’s tour hundreds of millions of dollars in broadcasting and sponsorship.</p> <p>“We remain dedicated to finding a resolution to this,” Simon told The Tennis Podcast. “We want to find a resolution that Peng can be comfortable with, the Chinese government can be comfortable with, and we can be comfortable with. We are not about walking away from China. We have suspended our operations there right now. We will continue to do that until we get to a resolution.</p>

	<p>“We will stay resolute. We do hope to be back there in 2023 with the resolution that shows progress was made in the space. That’s a victory for the world if we can accomplish that.”</p> <p>Peng, who had already effectively retired from professional tennis, made an appearance at the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February and denied she had accused anyone of sexual assault, saying her post had been misunderstood. She added that she herself had deleted the social media post and denied that she had “disappeared”. The WTA, however, stuck to its demand for a formal investigation into Peng’s allegations and an opportunity to meet with her privately to discuss the situation.</p> <p>“We have not had any recent communication with Peng and the world has not seen Peng since the Olympics either,” Simon said. “I don’t think you will make change in this world by walking away from issues. You have to create change. It might not be everything we want. But we have to find a solution that finds that balance that allows us to go back and see progress in the area.”</p> <p>The WTA has yet to announce its 2022 calendar for events after the US Open grand slam in September, but Simon said the governing body would announce a “fairly solid” autumn schedule within the next two or three weeks.</p> <p>While there has been signs of collaboration between the ATP Tour and the WTA since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the men’s Tour has not withdrawn its presence from China and will host four tournaments in the country this season. Simon said he respected the ATP’s position.</p> <p>“Their difference is that ... they don’t have a member that’s affected there,” Simon added. “They will have to make their own decisions at this point of time. Would we love to have their support on what we are standing for there and the issues? Absolutely. But we are not trying to influence their decision in any way, it has to be theirs.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 New US ambassador to Ukraine nominated</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/ukraine-ambassador-embassy-biden.html?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/ukraine-ambassador-embassy-biden.html?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout</a> <a href="#">link back to briefing</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Biden’s pick for ambassador to Ukraine will bolster <a href="#">relations between Washington and Kyiv</a> after years without a Senate-confirmed envoy in the post, veteran diplomats say, but a return to a U.S. diplomatic presence during a war brings new risk for the Biden administration.</p> <p>After months of delays that <a href="#">confounded veteran diplomats</a>, Mr. Biden on Monday announced his intention to nominate for the post Bridget Brink, the current U.S. ambassador to Slovakia. A native of Michigan, Ms. Brink joined the State Department in 1996 and has served in Serbia, Uzbekistan and Georgia.</p> <p>If confirmed, Ms. Brink will become a high-level interlocutor between Ukraine’s government and the Biden administration, which have been communicating on an unusually direct basis. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken speaks several times a week with his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, and other top Biden officials are in regular contact with their equivalents. Even though the United States has been represented by a capable acting ambassador in Kristina Kvien, analysts say there is no substitute for a designated official in the country who can coordinate among multiple departments and agencies.</p> <p>For now, Ms. Brink has no obvious base of operations. The State Department shuttered its Kyiv embassy shortly before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24 and subsequently ordered all U.S. diplomats out of the country. None are known to have returned.</p> <p>After a <a href="#">secretive visit to Ukraine over the weekend</a>, however, Mr. Blinken told reporters that the United States would begin to restore a diplomatic presence in the country and that he hoped the embassy could reopen “over a couple of weeks.”</p>

The return of American diplomats to the country, even to western and central cities hours from the current front lines, inevitably comes with a degree of danger. Although Russian forces have consolidated to wage a brutal ground war in Ukraine's south and east, they are still conducting periodic strikes across the country, including a mid-April [missile attack in Lviv](#) that killed eight people.

Starting this week, diplomats who have been working from eastern Poland will make day trips to the relatively peaceful city of Lviv in western Ukraine, U.S. officials added, and return to Poland for the night. "We're doing it deliberately, we're doing it carefully, we're doing it with the security of our personnel foremost in mind," Mr. Blinken said.

During his visit to Kyiv, Mr. Blinken said he saw people walking the streets, "evidence of the fact that the battle for Kyiv was won and there is what looks from the surface, at least, to be normal life in Kyiv."

Ms. Brink would be the first Senate-confirmed ambassador to hold the post since mid-2019, when President Donald J. Trump removed Marie L. Yovanovitch, a career diplomat and anti-corruption advocate who was criticized by Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, Rudolph W. Giuliani, and associates as Mr. Giuliani tried to dig up dirt in the country on Mr. Biden's son, Hunter.

In 2019, at her swearing-in ceremony for the ambassadorship of Slovakia, Ms. Brink talked about the experiences of her grandfather and her husband's grandparents in Europe during World War II. In February, Ms. Brink visited the border between Ukraine and Slovakia to witness the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. "My heart is with every victim of this senseless war," she said, according to a State Department news release.

Congressional officials noted that Mr. Biden had not yet formally submitted his nomination, even though the Biden administration notified Ukraine's government months ago that Ms. Brink was its choice for the job. It is customary to seek prior approval for ambassadorial picks from host governments, and Ukraine was slow to sign off for reasons that are unclear.

In a statement on Monday, Senator Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader, said the Senate "will prioritize her confirmation once she comes before the Senate and move her as quickly as possible."

Republicans have blocked or delayed dozens of Mr. Biden's diplomatic picks, but an aide to a Senate Republican active on foreign affairs issues said on Monday that he did not anticipate much resistance to Ms. Brink's nomination.

It is unclear how much protection Ms. Brink and other American diplomats in Kyiv will have. American embassies around the world are guarded by U.S. Marine contingents that have numbered in the dozens in war zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan. But U.S. officials have declined to say whether troops will accompany the returning diplomats.

Eric S. Rubin, the president of the American Foreign Service Association, called Ms. Brink "a superbly qualified senior career Foreign Service officer" and said he hoped she could be confirmed quickly. He applauded Mr. Blinken's plan to reopen the embassy in Kyiv.

Some former diplomats and U.S. officials have been concerned that the Biden administration removed its personnel from Ukraine too quickly earlier this year. U.S. diplomats left the country before some of their foreign counterparts.

In an October speech, Mr. Blinken himself warned that the State Department had grown too risk-averse and said diplomats could not function effectively in dangerous areas if they accepted no risk.

"A world of zero risk is not a world in which American diplomacy can deliver," Mr. Blinken said. "We have to accept risk and manage it smartly."

Before the drawdown of staff, about 800 to 900 people worked in the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. About 300 of those were Americans, and the rest were Ukrainian employees.

William B. Taylor Jr., a retired veteran diplomat who twice served as ambassador to Ukraine, said he had spoken with American diplomats and Ukrainian citizens who had worked in the embassy and learned they were eager to go back.

“For the diplomats, this is what they do,” he said. “For most of the State Department personnel assigned overseas, they understand the risks.”

Mr. Taylor said it was unlikely the embassy would be the target of a Russian attack, and the fact that some U.S. allies had already decided to return gave greater impetus to Washington.

But even if Russia has no intention of harming Americans, war zones are always dangerous. During the 1999 NATO bombing campaign of Serbia, the United States mistakenly struck China’s embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese state media employees.

The State Department increased protection measures for diplomats after President Vladimir V. Putin annexed Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and sent Russian weapons and troops to support a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine. Mr. Taylor said that when he first served as ambassador, from 2006 to 2009, he could travel around without diplomatic security. After he returned in 2019, following Mr. Trump’s decision to remove Ms. Yovanovitch from the job, he could not go running in the capital without a security detail.

Like many American embassies, the one in Kyiv is housed in a fortified building outside the city center. Ukrainians help guard the embassy, and a small group of American Marines was also posted there before the war began in February.

U.S. officials have been especially wary of diplomatic risk following the 2012 attack by militants on an American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, which killed four Americans, including Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. Republicans, including Mike Pompeo, a congressman who later became C.I.A. director and secretary of state, tormented Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for years with accusations of negligence.

Security will be one of many issues that Ms. Brink is expected to juggle in Kyiv if she is confirmed by the Senate. She will probably often visit the presidential palace in the heart of Kyiv and the headquarters of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. She is expected to help set up secure communications between Ukrainian and American leaders, and she will be tasked with relaying requests for aid from the Ukrainians to Washington.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Explosions in Transnistria; new war front?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/world/europe/explosions-transnistria-moldova-ukraine.html?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/world/europe/explosions-transnistria-moldova-ukraine.html?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout</a> <a href="#">link back to briefing</a>
GIST	<p>Explosions on Monday shook Transnistria, a Russia-aligned breakaway region of Moldova that borders Ukraine, and the local government said a security agency building in the region’s capital, Tiraspol, had possibly been attacked using grenade launchers.</p> <p>In <a href="#">a statement</a>, the local internal affairs ministry said no one was injured because of the incident. <a href="#">Pictures</a> posted on social media, and claimed to be from the scene, appeared to show smoke billowing out of broken windows with rescue workers in the streets below.</p>



	<p>While the fighting in Ukraine is concentrated in the east, Transnistria, which hosts hundreds of Russian troops and has a large ethnic Russian population, occupies a strategically important spot on Ukraine's western flank, reaching within about 25 miles of Ukraine's chief port city, Odesa.</p> <p>On Friday, a Russian general said one of Moscow's current aims in Ukraine is to establish "yet another point of access" to Transnistria, a claim that echoed Ukrainian fears that Russia wants to seize Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast, including Odesa, linking itself to Transnistria. Military experts questioned whether the general's comments reflected Kremlin policy, and whether the Russian military could carry out such a mission.</p> <p>During the buildup to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian officials warned of Russian "provocations," including in Transnistria — attacks that it said Moscow might stage but blame on Kyiv as a pretext for military action.</p> <p>Transnistria, a thin strip of land with fewer than 500,000 people, broke away from Moldova with support from Moscow in a brief war in the early 1990s. It has <a href="#">a repressive government</a>, heavily dependent on Russia, and Russian state-run television is dominant there.</p> <p>Since the Ukraine war erupted, the Moldovan and Ukrainian militaries have been concerned about whether Transnistria would enter the fighting as a base for attacking Ukraine from the west.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 UK estimates 15,000 Russia troops killed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/ukraine-russia-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/ukraine-russia-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout</a> <a href="#">link back to briefing#roughly-15000-russian-troops-have-died-since-the-start-of-the-war-the-uk-estimates</a>
GIST	<p>About 15,000 Russian military personnel have been killed since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, the British defense secretary, Ben Wallace, told the House of Commons on Monday.</p> <p>The estimate, based on the British Defense Ministry's assessments, is on the higher end of the 7,000 to 15,000 range that NATO officials estimated <a href="#">a month ago</a>, but is lower than what the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine <a href="#">reported</a> on Monday: About 21,900 Russian deaths.</p> <p>The British Defense Ministry <a href="#">also estimates</a> that Russia has lost more than 2,000 armored vehicles — including at least 530 tanks — as well as over 60 helicopters and fighter jets since the start of the war, Mr. Wallace said.</p> <p>It has been common during the war for Ukrainian estimates of Russian losses to skew high and for Russian estimates to skew low. But the British estimate of Russian deaths is roughly 11 times higher than what Russia last claimed, underscoring just how much the human cost of President Vladimir V. Putin's war diverges from <a href="#">what Russians have been told</a>.</p> <p>Russia reported 1,351 total military deaths on March 25 and has not officially updated the toll since. Even a month ago, that figure was already seen by the West and Ukraine as a severe undercount.</p> <p>In April, when a Kremlin spokesman acknowledged "significant losses of troops," he did not provide an updated death toll. In theory, the Russian public could never receive one; Mr. Putin decreed in 2015 that military casualties could be <a href="#">classified as military secrets</a>, even during peacetime.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Program: how to sponsor Ukraine refugees</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/americans-sponsor-ukrainians.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/americans-sponsor-ukrainians.html</a>



The Biden administration on Monday established [a program](#) that allows Americans to sponsor Ukrainian refugees and have them temporarily stay in the United States under a system known as [humanitarian parole](#).

The program, called Uniting for Ukraine, is a piece of a larger initiative to temporarily resettle as many as 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, but migrants themselves cannot directly apply. Instead, a sponsor in the United States must apply on their behalf, and then migrants may complete the process after their sponsor is approved.

Here's how the program works:

### **American Sponsors**

Most people who reside legally in the United States — including green card holders and [other immigrants](#) — may apply to sponsor Ukrainian migrants, as long as they can prove they can financially support them. That could include providing room and board or direct payments to the refugees for necessary expenses.

Sponsors must designate specific refugees to assist. Welcome.US, a humanitarian group for refugee resettlement, has [created a mailing list](#) for people interested in becoming a sponsor.

Here's a step-by-step process of how sponsors can apply:

- Go to the web portal for the program at [dhs.gov/ukraine](https://dhs.gov/ukraine).
- [File an I-134 form](#). This document helps prove the sponsor can financially support the Ukrainians while they are in the United States. Sponsors must document their own income and assets, as well as the income and assets of the migrants and families being sponsored.
- The sponsor will then go through a government vetting process “to protect against exploitation and abuse” of the migrants, according to the instructions on the web portal. Officials reviewing the application may also ask the sponsor for additional supporting evidence or an interview before approval.
- If approved, the sponsor will be notified in writing.

### **Ukrainian Migrants**

Ukrainian citizens and their children and spouses or common-law partners can qualify for humanitarian parole under the program. They need not be in Ukraine now, but must have fled after Feb. 11.

After their sponsor is approved, Ukrainians and families who were listed in the application will receive notification of the next steps in the process.

Those include:

- Confirming personal information — such as names, dates of birth, phone numbers and addresses — as well as family relationships using a [myUSCIS](#) account.
- Providing evidence of vaccination for [measles, polio and the coronavirus](#).
- Passing security checks.
- Undergoing a medical screening for tuberculosis within 14 days of arriving in the United States.

After completing the necessary steps, migrants will be notified of final approval and authorization to travel to the United States through myUSCIS. Migrants must then enter the United States within 90 days, and are responsible for arranging their travel once approved.

### **Other Questions**

#### **How long can a Ukrainian migrant stay?**

Ukrainian migrants who are approved for the program may stay for up to two years. They may also [request authorization to work](#) in the United States once they arrive.

#### **How long will the process take?**

The administration said the program was intended to be speedier than the usual immigration process, but could not say how long it might take.

#### **Can a Ukrainian already in the United States apply?**

Ukrainians already in the United States cannot apply for humanitarian parole. They can, however, apply for [temporary protected status](#), which allows them to stay and work for up to 18 months, as long as they were in the United States since April 11 or earlier.

#### **What happens now to the Ukrainians at the Mexican border?**

The Biden administration closed the border to Ukrainian migrants on Monday. Anyone still in Mexico can apply for humanitarian parole with a sponsor, but must wait for approval before entering the United States.

#### **How much does it cost to apply?**

There is no fee for Ukrainians to apply for humanitarian parole through this program. Filing for humanitarian parole through [the standard form](#) costs \$575 per person. Ukrainians who already paid that fee through another pending application can have it refunded.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Covid outbreak in Beijing; testing mandated</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#covid-beijing-shanghai">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#covid-beijing-shanghai</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING — Families in Beijing rushed to stock up on food. Supermarkets stayed open late. Residents endured long lines for mandatory testing. China’s stock markets plunged.</p> <p>A fresh coronavirus outbreak in China’s capital has raised concerns that Beijing could become, <a href="#">after Shanghai</a>, the next Chinese megacity to put life on hold to contain the spread of the Omicron variant.</p> <p>The Beijing municipal government ordered late Monday night that almost everyone in the city would have to take three P.C.R. tests for the coronavirus over five days. The order came after 70 coronavirus cases had been found in the city since Friday.</p> <p>Nearly two-thirds of the cases have been in the affluent district of Chaoyang, which ordered late Sunday that all of its 3.5 million residents must be tested on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The municipal government then ordered late Monday night that residents of 10 other districts — almost all of the city’s residents except in a few heavily rural outskirts — would have to be tested on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.</p> <p>The national government has leaned heavily on lockdowns despite their high <a href="#">social</a> and <a href="#">economic costs</a>, in pursuit of President Xi Jinping’s “zero Covid” strategy of eliminating infections. In several cities, mass testing has sometimes been a prelude to stringent lockdowns, like the four-week one in Shanghai that has kindled widespread complaints from residents there.</p> <p>The outbreak in Beijing, the seat of Communist Party power, has <a href="#">added significance for Mr. Xi</a>, who had ordered that the crowded nation’s capital remain free of the virus. An extended lockdown there would add to the political and economic pressures on his government.</p> <p>“Chaoyang District is now the topmost focus for pandemic prevention,” Cai Qi, the Communist Party secretary of Beijing, and a protégé of Mr. Xi’s, said in instructions cited in the official Beijing Daily newspaper on Sunday. Mr. Cai appeared determined to show that Beijing would not hesitate to take steps to stifle infections, which has been a criticism leveled by some at Shanghai.</p> <p>“Important pandemic measures cannot be left waiting till the next day,” Mr. Cai added. “All at-risk sites and individuals involved in these cases must be checked that day.”</p>

The outbreak in Beijing is another blow to the already stumbling Chinese economy. Waves of selling hit the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets on Monday, driving down by 4.9 percent in a single day the CSI 300 Index of large Chinese companies' share prices.

While the entire city of Shanghai has been locked down for nearly a month, Beijing is experimenting initially with a more selective approach. A handful of neighborhoods have been locked down, and residents of apartment complexes adjacent to these neighborhoods have been strongly discouraged from leaving their homes.

The largest area where residents are locked down or discouraged from leaving their homes covers about a square mile of southern Chaoyang District, across a wide avenue from the Beijing University of Technology. Shops on the university's side of the avenue were still open early Monday evening, but apparel stores, convenience stores, eateries and many other businesses on the far side of the avenue were all dark and empty.

A half dozen police squad cars were parked with blue, white and red flashing lights at one corner of the area. Several more squad cars were parked along the road. A couple of ambulances stood ready to whisk away anybody found to be infected. But there was no easily visible sign of the high green security fences being used in Shanghai to cordon off homes and neighborhoods.

Li Haiqing, a 27-year-old resident of a locked-down neighborhood several miles farther east, said he had stocked up on instant food, snacks, water and paper towels on Saturday and so had been ready when he awoke Sunday morning to find that no one was allowed to leave his apartment complex.

"It took me by surprise," he said. "I wonder why it happened so suddenly — it feels as if it had nothing to do with me," adding, "Because there are confirmed cases after all, I think safety is the first priority."

Cases have been spreading in Beijing for a week, with multiple rounds of transmission, Pang Xinghuo, deputy director of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Beijing, said at a news conference on Sunday.

Chaoyang is the most fashionable district in the city, with numerous luxury shopping malls and expensive apartments. At Shin Kong Place, a mall with stores for brands like Chanel, Saint Laurent and Versace, long lines quickly formed at the high-priced supermarket as families rushed to stockpile food.

At a P.C.R. testing booth on the street a block away, several dozen people were still in line at 8 p.m. on Sunday when the staff members inside, in full-body white hazmat suits, announced that they were closing for the night. The closing of the booth provoked anger from the people standing in the darkness waiting for the \$3.80 tests, for which the results are typically returned in 12 hours. Many shouted at the staff, and several hit and kicked the booth and tried to wrench open its door and to argue with the staff.

Chaoyang had not required residents to be tested on Sunday night. But without new test results, residents are not allowed to catch a train or flight to another city before any possible lockdown is imposed. When Beijing had a small outbreak in the summer of 2020, people flocked to train stations in a rush to leave the city before they could be trapped in it.

Officials in Beijing hope to avoid the experience of Shanghai, where a stifling lockdown this month has dragged down China's economic outlook and stirred public anger. Residents have shared bleak stories and criticisms of the lockdown through online letters, a rap song and a bleak video.

"We Shanghai residents feel that there have been many absurd, baffling and even cruel compulsory measures," said Ji Xiaolong, a resident of the city, who has publicly criticized the government's handling of the lockdown.

On Monday, the [Shanghai health authorities said](#) the city had confirmed 19,455 cases on the previous day, a drop of 1,603 from the preceding daily count. The city has allowed residents of some areas deemed safe

to step outside, but leaders have warned that the wider restrictions must stay in place until infections are wiped out.

“Shanghai is now at a crucial moment in the zero offensive,” Sun Chunlan, the Chinese vice premier overseeing the lockdown, [said last week](#). “The pandemic won’t wait for people, and there can be no thought of putting our feet up and taking a breather.”

Residents in the Pudong District of Shanghai [shared pictures](#) over the weekend of new metal fences and cage-like barriers going up around apartment exits, part of the district’s drive to enforce “hard” isolation for locked-down buildings.

A high point of the public pushback against the city’s policies has been “Sounds of April,” [a six-minute video](#) that — against melancholy music and black-and-white overhead footage of Shanghai — replays the voices of residents begging for help from officials. The video spread fast and wide on Chinese social media last week before censors pulled it down.

It opens with Shanghai officials saying last month that a lockdown would not be necessary, and then that it would last just a few days.

Then comes a montage of voices: a truck driver carrying food for the stricken city who says his shipment risks rotting because nobody has come to receive it; a son saying his aged and ill father was refused hospital care; a resident forced to quarantine in an unfinished hospital; a local official asking for understanding from a man whose pleas for medical attention have gone unanswered.

Some critics of Shanghai’s response are senior members of the academic establishment who usually keep their views muted.

In a submission to the government that spread on Chinese news media, Tang Xiaotian, a professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, warned that officials should avoid potentially illegal measures to confine people. Residents have been angered by measures such as the barriers around apartments that could hamper escape in a fire, he noted.

Official propaganda about the lockdown in Shanghai had “hurt the credibility of the government,” Liu Xiaobing, a professor at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, who is a member of China’s national legislature, wrote in an essay shared on Chinese social media. It was also later removed. He did not respond to an email seeking comment.

“The policy enforcers only worry about the trouble they could bring on themselves if they relax controls,” Mr. Liu wrote. “They never worry about being called to account from the harm caused by dead-handed restrictions.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 China lockdowns; govt. meddling economy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#china-covid-zero-economy">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#china-covid-zero-economy</a>
GIST	<p>Yang Wenhui should be a proud example of China’s rise from economic rubble to global powerhouse.</p> <p>Growing up poor, he ate so much cabbage that he didn’t touch it again for many years. He worked as a farmer and a construction worker before joining the country’s nascent logistics industry. In 2003, he started his own freight logistics company, striking gold as online shopping took off in the 2010s and products moved swiftly between provinces.</p> <p>Then the Omicron variant of the coronavirus started spreading in China. In the government’s zealous pursuit of its “zero Covid” policy, dozens of cities along the 1,300 miles of highway between the capital, Beijing, and the southern province of Guangdong, his main freight route, imposed travel restrictions and lockdowns. Many truckers were grounded. Cargo prices rose by 20 percent in a matter of weeks.</p>

“I’ve been in the logistics business for 28 years,” Mr. Yang, 47, said in an interview. “But I’ve never seen a mess like this. There were numerous emergencies to deal with.” He estimates that he lost tens of thousands of dollars in March.

China’s economy is a giant, sophisticated machine that requires numerous parts to work together. Behind its 1.4 billion consumers are 150 million registered businesses that provide jobs, food and everything that keeps the machine humming.

Now, in the name of pandemic control, the Chinese government is meddling with the economy in ways that the country hasn’t seen for decades, wreaking havoc on business.

Businesspeople worry that the country is going back to a planned economy, and the great Covid disruptions could last until after a Communist Party congress late this year when China’s top leader, Xi Jinping, is expected to secure a third term. A surge in cases in Beijing is amplifying global fears as well, prompting a sell-off in stocks on concerns that China’s economy could take another hit.

In the past two years, many governments around the world have sought a balance between controlling the pandemic and keeping businesses open. China was largely successful until recently when Omicron, a milder, if more infectious, variant, caused a serious outbreak. As much of the world is opening up, the country is doubling down on its zero Covid policy, making low death and infection rates central to its legitimacy.

Since March, China had reported about half a million Covid infections and 48 deaths through Friday.

Around 344 million people, or a quarter of the country’s population, are under some kind of lockdown, according to the investment bank Nomura. The lockdowns have left China’s biggest city, Shanghai, a metropolis of 25 million people, a ghost town; farmers in the northeastern granary cooped up in the spring planting season; and many factories, shops and restaurants across the country suspending their operations.

The stringent measures are exacting a heavy toll on the economy. Nationwide consumption fell 3.5 percent in March, while spending on restaurants plummeted 16 percent, according to official data.

“This is not only making it impossible for many private businesses to survive, but also accelerating outbound immigration and quickly dampening willingness to invest,” said Zhiwu Chen, an economist at University of Hong Kong. “Once people lose confidence in the country’s future, it will be extremely difficult for the economy to recover from the zero Covid policy’s impact.”

Business owners and managers are complaining that the current disruptions are worse and more widespread than those of early 2020, when logistics, commerce and industrial production in much of the country quickly returned to normal. Back then, the government’s digital surveillance systems to limit the movements of vehicles and people were less extensive.

The business community is waiting nervously to see if the government will apply the Shanghai lockdown model to other cities. The approach has a strong element of a planned economy, in which the government controls business activities, rather than letting the market regulate supply and demand.

During the outbreak, the Shanghai government upended the commercial systems and tried to provide for 25 million people on its own. The results are familiar to Chinese of a certain age: scarcity of supplies and mushrooming of black markets.

Because of Covid restrictions, commercial trucks have a hard time delivering food and household goods to Shanghai. Inside the city, only vehicles with passes are allowed on the road.

On the black market, some operators are willing to pay \$2,000 for a day pass. The cost is then priced into the groceries they sell to the residents.

Some neighborhood committees allow only government-organized grocery distributions; others don't allow their residents to purchase diapers, baby formula and toilet paper because they are not considered necessities. Elsewhere, fruit, beer and coffee are considered frivolous items.

Starting in the 1980s, China moved away from its planned economy, because it left everyone poor. It didn't work in the former Soviet Union, nor is it working in North Korea.

Besides the troubling ghost of a planned economy, the business community is facing conflicting messages from the government. Premier Li Keqiang and ministers in Beijing have been urging authorities to balance pandemic-control measures with a need to encourage growth. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology sent a working group to Shanghai to ensure that key companies and supply chains could resume operations.

But Mr. Xi has not budged from his zero Covid position. "Perseverance is victory," he said on April 13. The state media, provincial party secretaries and lower-level government officials all know who is in charge and are eager to show their loyalty. Many local officials are escalating pandemic-control measures so they don't risk an outbreak that could put their positions in danger.

Some factories in Shanghai, such as Tesla and some of its suppliers, have resumed production. But they must follow a set of complicated and expensive pandemic-control measures, including creating what's called a closed-loop management system in which workers live on-site and test regularly for the virus.

Not many companies are willing or able to do this. One senior executive of a major logistics company told me that it had only a few thousand delivery workers back on the job in Shanghai because it lacked the capacity to provide lodging for so many workers. That's significantly lower than the more than 60,000 delivery workers the company had in peak seasons in the past few years.

The disruptions are especially difficult for smaller businesses.

A truck driver who asked me to use only his surname, Zhao, has been stuck in his vehicle, unable to work, in a Shanghai suburb since March 28 when the district was locked down. He, along with nearly 60 other truckers, have been drinking from fire hoses, struggling to secure food and without a bathroom to wash up in.

He's losing sleep, wondering how he will cover his loans: about \$2,000 monthly for his truck and about \$500 for mortgages, while continuing to support his wife and their two children.

He told me that he had borrowed money from relatives and friends to pay the loans this month. If he can't start working soon, he said, next month he will have to sell his truck.

The chief executive of a high-flying consumer brand is also wondering how long her company's cash can last. The company raised \$100 million last year and had ambitious expansion plans, she said in an interview. But nearly a third of her company's 150 retail stores had to shut their doors in locked-down cities. Their online sales, which weren't hurt in 2020, are suffering now because many cities shut the highway exits, halting e-commerce deliveries.

If the lockdowns haven't eased by May 1, a public holiday in China, she will have to consider letting go some of her 1,000 employees.

She and most people I interviewed for this column asked for anonymity, because private enterprises are easy and vulnerable targets for government retaliations.

John Ji, a real estate developer in Nanjing of Jiangsu Province, is anxiously watching the lockdowns in Shanghai and other cities. He believes that many people will lose their jobs and have difficulty paying mortgages. When nobody can afford housing, he asked, who will buy his apartments?

	<p>Mr. Ji also grew up poor. Before he turned 10, his staple was sweet potatoes; he ate meat only a couple of times a year.</p> <p>“I’m worried whether we’re going back to a planned economy,” he told me. “If the economy keeps slumping, we might become poor again.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 New China lockdowns whipsaws stocks, oil</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#stocks-china-covid-lockdown">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#stocks-china-covid-lockdown</a>
GIST	<p>Global stocks fell on Monday on fears that a <a href="#">coronavirus outbreak in Beijing</a> could lead to broader lockdowns in China, which would have a negative effect on the world economy. Commodities like oil also fell in anticipation that stringent new restrictions would depress growth and exports in the world’s second-largest economy.</p> <p>The Shanghai composite plummeted 5.1 percent, the index’s biggest daily decline since February 2020, and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong lost 3.7 percent. The tightly controlled Chinese currency, the renminbi, also fell about 1 percent versus the U.S. dollar, extending recent losses. The wave of selling continued in Europe, where the Stoxx Europe 600 lost 1.8 percent.</p> <p>Wall Street, however, bounced back from a drop of as much as 1.5 percent, edging higher by the end of the day as technology stocks rallied. The S&amp;P 500 ended the day with a gain of 0.6 percent, while the technology-heavy Nasdaq composite rose 1.3 percent. Last week, the S&amp;P 500 dropped 2.8 percent, its third consecutive week of losses.</p> <p>Oil prices also recovered from the worst of their losses, and were down more than 3 percent by Monday afternoon, with Brent crude settling at about below \$102 a barrel, after reaching nearly \$115 a week ago. West Texas Intermediate futures were trading at about \$98.50 a barrel.</p> <p>The war in Ukraine has reverberated through the global economy, pushing inflation to levels not seen in decades, prompting central banks to raise interest rates. But the latest worries come from China, where the central government <a href="#">has relied on lockdowns</a> of major population and manufacturing areas, in pursuit of the Communist Party leader Xi Jinping’s “zero Covid” strategy of eliminating infections.</p> <p>The Beijing government reported on Monday that 70 coronavirus cases had been found in city since Friday. The district with the highest case numbers ordered all 3.5 million residents to take coronavirus tests in the coming days. In other cities, mass testing has sometimes been a prelude to stringent lockdowns, like the four-week one in <a href="#">Shanghai</a>.</p> <p>The yield on 10-year Treasuries was down about eight basis points, to about 2.82 percent, another sign of jitters about economic growth.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Global vaccination drive losing momentum</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#covid-vaccines-world-africa">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/mandates-cases-vaccine-covid-19#covid-vaccines-world-africa</a>
GIST	<p>In the middle of last year, the World Health Organization <a href="#">began</a> promoting an ambitious goal, one it said was essential for ending the pandemic: fully vaccinate 70 percent of the population in every country against <a href="#">Covid-19</a> by June 2022.</p> <p>Now, it is clear that the world will fall far short of that target by the deadline. And there is a growing sense of resignation among public health experts that high Covid vaccination coverage may never be achieved in</p>



most lower-income countries, as badly needed funding from the United States dries up and both governments and donors turn to other priorities.

“The reality is that there is a loss of momentum,” said Dr. Isaac Adewole, a former health minister of Nigeria who now serves as a consultant for the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Only a few of the world’s [82 poorest countries](#) — including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia and [Nepal](#) — have reached the 70 percent vaccination threshold. Many are under 20 percent, according to data compiled from government sources by the [Our World in Data](#) project at the University of Oxford.

By comparison, about two-thirds of the world’s [richest countries](#) have reached 70 percent. (The United States is at 66 percent.)

The consequences of giving up on achieving high vaccination coverage worldwide could prove severe. Public health experts say that abandoning the global effort could lead to the emergence of dangerous new variants that would threaten the world’s precarious efforts to live with the virus.

“This pandemic is not over yet — far from it — and it’s imperative that countries use the doses available to them to protect as much of their population as possible,” said Dr. Seth Berkley, chief executive of Gavi, the nonprofit that runs the global vaccine clearinghouse Covax.

Countries in different parts of the world, including some in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, have seen their vaccination rates stagnate in recent months [at a third](#) or less of their populations. But Africa’s vaccination rate remain the most dismal.

Fewer than 17 percent of Africans have received a primary Covid immunization. [Nearly half](#) of the vaccine doses delivered to the continent thus far have gone unused. Last month, the number of doses injected on the continent [fell by 35 percent](#) compared to February. W.H.O. officials attributed the drop to mass vaccination pushes being replaced by smaller-scale campaigns in several countries.

Some global health experts say the world missed a prime opportunity last year to provide vaccines to lower-income countries, when the public was more fearful of Covid and motivated to get vaccinated.

“There was a time people were very desperate to get vaccinated, but the vaccines were not there. And then they realized that without the vaccination, they didn’t die,” said Dr. Adewole, who wants to see countries continue to pursue the 70 percent target.

What momentum remains in the global vaccination campaign has been hindered by a shortfall in funding for the equipment, transportation and personnel needed to get shots into arms.

In the United States, a key funder of the vaccination effort, lawmakers stripped \$5 billion meant for global pandemic aid from the coronavirus response package that is expected to come up for a vote in the next few weeks. Biden administration officials [have said](#) that without the funds, they will be unable to provide support for vaccine delivery to more than 20 under-vaccinated countries.

Some public health experts point to reasons for optimism that the global vaccination campaign still has steam. Despite the drop off from the February peak, the number of Covid vaccinations being administered each day in Africa is [still near a pandemic high](#). And Gavi earlier this month [drew a significant new round](#) of funding pledges, securing \$4.8 billion in commitments, although it fell short of its \$5.2 billion goal.

There is also hope that a [global Covid summit](#) the White House plans to co-host next month could be an opportunity to generate momentum and funding.

But the drop in public demand has led some health officials and experts to quietly, and in some cases outright, question whether the 70 percent vaccination target is feasible or even sensible.

Reported fatalities from Covid-19 remain comparatively low in sub-Saharan Africa, although [there is debate](#) about how much of this reflects poor data tracking. The perception, however, in many countries in the region is that the disease does not pose a serious threat, certainly not as much as other pervasive health problems that demand attention with scarce health care resources.

Many lower-income governments are turning their focus to their economies and other health issues like H.I.V., said Fifi Rahman, a civil society representative to a [W.H.O.-launched group](#) coordinating the global Covid response. “There’s a sense of a lot of competing priorities, but that’s a symptom of the momentum being gone. Because when the momentum was there, everyone was like, ‘Where are our vaccines?’”

In rural areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, where the reported Covid death rate is very low, there is a surge in measles cases threatening 20 million children. Yet the government says it cannot spare the resources to provide supplementary measles vaccinations this year, said Christopher Mambula, medical manager for Doctors Without Border in East Africa. In this kind of context, it makes little sense to continue to divert resources to widespread vaccination against Covid, he said.

As African governments have received more vaccines donated from wealthy countries and struggled to distribute even those supplies, their interest in ordering more doses has dropped.

The African Union still aims to vaccinate 70 percent of its population by the end of 2022. But with countries slow to use up donated vaccines, the bloc has not exercised its options to order more doses of the shots from Johnson & Johnson and Moderna.

The South African drugmaker Aspen Pharmacare earlier this year finalized [a deal](#) to bottle and market the Johnson & Johnson vaccine across Africa, a contract that was billed as an early step toward Africa’s development of a robust vaccine production industry. Aspen geared up for production, but no buyers, including the African Union and Covax, have placed orders yet, said Stephen Saad, Aspen’s chief executive.

The Serum Institute of India, the world’s largest vaccine maker, [stopped its production](#) of Covid shots in December last year, when its stockpile grew to 200 million doses; Bharat Biotech, another Indian firm that was a major producer, also stopped making vaccines in the face of low demand. The companies say they have no further orders since their contracts with the Indian government ended in March.

After the W.H.O. began promoting the 70 percent vaccination goal, many lower-income governments adopted the target for their own populations. The Biden administration also endorsed it last September, setting a deadline of September 2022.

At the time, two doses of the vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna were understood to offer very strong protection against even mild disease, and there was still hope that achieving high levels of vaccination coverage would tame the virus. But the emergence of new variants and the spread of the virus in Africa changed the calculus.

The vaccine regimens that had been planned for the developing world [offered little protection](#) against infection with the Omicron variant. And as sub-Saharan African countries were shut out of vaccine distribution for much of last year, more and more Africans gained protection against the virus from natural infection, which studies have shown works as well as two mRNA doses in preventing infection. New data from the W.H.O. shows that at least two-thirds of Africans had been infected with the virus before the Omicron wave.

Given these factors, some public health experts in Africa say the broad 70 percent goal no longer makes sense. “There’s very little value to it. In fact, we will gain much more by getting to more than 90 percent of people above the age of 50,” said Shabir Madhi, a professor of vaccinology and the dean of the faculty

of health sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. About two-thirds of South Africans above age 50 are currently fully vaccinated.

Dr. Madhi said that South Africa could close down mass vaccination sites and instead redouble its efforts to seek out the most vulnerable at church services and at government offices that pay out monthly pension benefits.

Katherine O'Brien, who directs the W.H.O.'s work on vaccines and immunizations, said the agency encourages countries to focus on its most vulnerable citizens rather than vaccinating "a random set of 70 percent" of their populations. The aspiration she said, has always been "100 percent of health workers, 100 percent of older adults, 100 percent of pregnant women, 100 percent of the people who fall into those highest risk groups."

Countries can of course make decisions about what health goal they wish to prioritize, Dr. O'Brien said, but finite resources should not be the obstacle to vaccinating against the coronavirus. "The world has enough resources to do this, if countries want to do it," she said. "And that should be really the North Star."

Some public health experts said that while the 70 percent vaccination threshold is clearly not achievable by its original deadline, it would be unwise and unethical to give up on that target over a longer time horizon. They expressed frustration about the growing gulf between wealthy countries vaccinating young children and offering healthy adults fourth vaccine doses, and the regions where the majority of people still do not have one dose.

"Why are we making it one target for high-income countries and one target for low income?" said Dr. Ayoade Alakija, a co-chair of the African Union's vaccine delivery program.

She said that even though many people in sub-Saharan Africa have been infected, there is still need for the additional protection that would come from a high level of vaccination coverage.

Modest vaccination coverage, she said, "is not considered a good enough level of protection in England, it's not a good enough level of protection in America. How is it OK not to be aiming for the very maximum, maximum we can? Aim for the sky and get to the top of the tree."

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Court allows elite school admissions rules</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/supreme-court-admissions-race.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/supreme-court-admissions-race.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday <a href="#">temporarily approved</a> new admissions criteria at an elite public high school in Virginia that eliminated standardized tests, clearing the way for the use of a policy intended to diversify the student body in choosing the class that will enter in the fall.</p> <p>The court's ruling rejected a request for emergency relief from a group that objected to the new rules, saying they harmed Asian American students.</p> <p>The court's brief order was unsigned and gave no reasons, which is typical when the court acts on emergency applications asking the justices to intervene while appeals are moving forward. The court's three most conservative members — Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel A. Alito Jr. and Neil M. Gorsuch — said they would have reinstated a trial judge's ruling blocking the new criteria. They, too, did not explain their thinking.</p> <p>The school, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Va., known as T.J., changed its admissions requirements in 2020 in the wake of protests over the murder of George Floyd.</p> <p>The school, among the best in the nation, is in Fairfax County, outside Washington, and accepts students from the county and from several surrounding counties and cities. Like admissions criteria at other elite</p>

public high schools across the country, the school's policies have been at the center of fierce debates among politicians and parents about whether and how to diversify enrollment.

A related issue is already before the Supreme Court, which will hear [challenges to admissions programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina](#) in the fall. Those programs explicitly take account of race as one factor among many.

The high school's new program, by contrast, uses race-neutral criteria. In addition to doing away with standardized tests, the program sets aside spots for the top 1.5 percent of students from each public middle school in the area, leaving about 100 openings for everyone else, including applicants from private schools and students who have been home-schooled.

Admissions administrators also consider "experience factors," such as whether students are poor or are learning English or are attending a middle school that was "historically underrepresented" at the high school. The administrators are not told the race, sex or name of any applicant.

After the changes went into effect in 2021, the percentage of Asian American students dropped to 54 percent from 73 percent. The percentage of Black students grew to 7 percent from no more than 2 percent; the percentage of Hispanic students grew to 11 percent from 3 percent; and the percentage of white students grew to 22 percent from 18 percent.

Across all of [Fairfax County's public schools](#), about 37 percent of students are white, 27 percent are Hispanic, 20 percent are Asian and 10 percent are Black.

The changes were challenged by a group called [Coalition for TJ](#), which includes some American parents of Asian American students and which is represented by the [Pacific Legal Foundation](#), a conservative legal organization that says it defends Americans from government overreach.

[The group argued](#) that the new admissions process amounted to race discrimination aimed at Asian American students.

[Judge Claude M. Hilton](#) of the Federal District Court in Alexandria [ruled for the challengers](#), saying that the changes were "racially motivated." The discussion of the planned changes, he wrote, was "infected with talk of racial balancing from its inception."

"It is clear that Asian American students are disproportionately harmed by the board's decision to overhaul T.J. admissions," he wrote. "Currently and in the future, Asian American applicants are disproportionately deprived of a level playing field."

A divided three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, in Richmond, Va., [stayed Judge Hilton's decision](#) while an appeal from the school board moved forward. That had the practical effect of keeping the new procedures in place for a second admissions cycle.

In a concurring opinion, [Judge Toby J. Heytens](#) wrote that the high school's new admissions program was lawful.

"The Supreme Court has repeatedly stated that it is constitutionally permissible to seek to increase racial (and other) diversity through race-neutral means," he wrote. "Indeed, it has *required* public officials to consider such measures before turning to race conscious alternatives."

Judge Heytens added that it would be impractical to switch back to the old criteria so late in the cycle, with admissions decisions for the fall due this month. "None of the current applicants was required to take the formerly mandated standardized tests, two-thirds of which are no longer commercially available," he wrote.

	<p>Lawyers for the school board <a href="#">told the Supreme Court</a> that a ruling for the challengers would threaten race-neutral means of achieving diversity that the court had at least tacitly endorsed. In <i>Fisher v. University of Texas</i> in 2016, for instance, the court rejected a challenge to an admissions program that included, among other elements, guaranteed admission to top students at every high school in the state.</p> <p>The school board's brief added that the percentage of Asian American students receiving offers of admission under the new program "substantially exceeded their share of the applicant pool," adding that "Asian Americans were the only racial group that was substantially overrepresented compared to its share of the applicant pool."</p> <p>"Moreover, the Asian American admissions rate under the plan was 19.48 percent, well within the historical 2004-2020 range of 16.8 percent to 25 percent," the brief said. "Those facts alone foreclose the coalition's claim that Asian Americans were disadvantaged in the admissions process."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Seattle PD losing more officers than hiring</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-police-department-losing-officers/281-65a35aa4-5c20-4bf2-8ad4-9131ead21dbb">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-police-department-losing-officers/281-65a35aa4-5c20-4bf2-8ad4-9131ead21dbb</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The <a href="#">Seattle Police Department</a> lost more officers than it hired in the first quarter of 2022.</p> <p>It's a trend that really began in the summer of 2020, and so far there is no concrete solution on how to change course.</p> <p>New data, to be released officially on Tuesday, shows that 43 sworn-in police staff have left in 2022, while 13 have been hired, leaving the department with a net loss of 30 officers.</p> <p>The trend is projected to continue. Data show the Seattle Police Department expects to hire 98 more officers in 2022 and lose 113.</p> <p>The corner of Third Avenue and Pike Street has been a flashpoint for conversations about police presence and public safety this year. A mobile police precinct has helped deter crime downtown.</p> <p>"It's not just the visibility but it also gives a place for the overtime officers working on Third Avenue to stage out of," Lewis said.</p> <p>After multiple shootings and assaults, the command post was established earlier this year. Lewis says it's here to stay, even though the officers who staff it have moved on.</p> <p>Downtown business owner Leila Farange credits the precinct for restoring order on Third Avenue. She says the police presence has boosted business at her gyro shop.</p> <p>"They cannot move the precinct, because that's our lifeline," Farange said. "It's increasing every day because people are coming back to work."</p> <p>The Seattle staffing situation has been mirrored in other big cities, like Denver and Dallas, where the Great Resignation also hit hard. But in Dallas there was also a big reduction in violent crime.</p> <p>It's a trend Seattle City Councilmember Andrew Lewis hopes to model.</p> <p>"We need to look holistically at the response, we're not going to get out of the public safety crisis that we have in Seattle by hiring more officers," Lewis said. "We need to be hiring more officers, that's necessary but not sufficient - we need to be hiring other responders as well, that's just the facts, that's just the reality."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 REAL ID for domestic flights? Not yet</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/verify/travel-verify/drivers-licenses-id-dont-need-to-be-real-id-to-fly-until-2023/536-d07ec0d6-1221-428a-88da-179f3dc5fbf6">https://www.king5.com/article/news/verify/travel-verify/drivers-licenses-id-dont-need-to-be-real-id-to-fly-until-2023/536-d07ec0d6-1221-428a-88da-179f3dc5fbf6</a>
GIST	<p>Anyone who has been to a DMV in the last couple of years has likely seen signs and posters that say REAL ID is coming soon, and everyone will need one to fly.</p> <p>REAL ID is a state ID card or driver's license that meets stricter issuance standards than a typical state ID would. Some states began the transition to REAL IDs for licenses a decade ago, while others only started more recently. REAL ID's stricter standards, and its late adoption by some states, has made it so many Americans still don't have a REAL ID.</p> <p>Angel texted the VERIFY team to ask if they need a REAL ID to travel domestically and internationally.</p> <p><b>THE QUESTION</b> Does your driver's license need to be a REAL ID to fly domestically?</p> <p><b>THE SOURCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">REAL ID Act of 2005</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Department of Homeland Security (DHS)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Transportation Security Administration (TSA)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">U.S. Travel Association</a>, an organization that represents companies in the American travel industry</li> <li>• <a href="#">National Conference of State Legislatures</a></li> </ul> <p><b>THE ANSWER</b> No, your driver's license does not need to be a REAL ID to fly domestically. That will change on May 3, 2023, when the federal government will start requiring it.</p> <p><b>WHAT WE FOUND</b> Currently, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) lists regular driver's licenses and state photo ID cards as <a href="#">acceptable forms of identification</a> at airport checkpoints, but it notes that all such IDs must be REAL ID compliant by the May 3, 2023 deadline for anyone seeking to fly within the U.S.</p> <p>After that date, the only driver's licenses or state ID cards TSA will accept will be REAL ID cards. TSA will also accept passports and certain other forms of identification. REAL ID cards won't be enough to get on international flights, <a href="#">TSA says</a>, which will still require passports.</p> <p>The <a href="#">REAL ID Act</a> became law in 2005, and prohibited federal agencies from accepting state driver's licenses and IDs, unless those documents met minimum security requirements. These requirements would be set by the Secretary of Homeland Security, and included "the incorporation of specified data, a common machine-readable technology, and certain anti-fraud security features."</p> <p>According to the <a href="#">Department of Homeland Security (DHS)</a>, to be issued a REAL ID, you must provide documents that prove your full legal name, your date of birth, your Social Security number, two proofs of address and lawful status. A REAL ID driver's license or ID will include a star on it to identify it, according to the <a href="#">U.S. Travel Association</a>, which represents companies in the American travel industry.</p> <p>For example, if someone were to apply for a REAL ID, they could provide a U.S. birth certificate or U.S. passport, an original Social Security card, a bank account statement with their address listed and a utility bill with their address listed as a <a href="#">set of acceptable documents</a>. Someone not born in the U.S. would have to <a href="#">provide a fifth document</a> to prove their legal authorization to be in the U.S., such as a Permanent Resident Card or a Certificate of Naturalization.</p> <p>In 2012 only 13 states had been verified by DHS as REAL ID compliant, according to the <a href="#">National Conference of State Legislatures</a>, and since then every state has updated its license requirements to meet REAL ID standards. <a href="#">States still allow</a> residents to get regular driver's licenses and state IDs by submitting only one proof of residency instead of two proofs.</p>



	<p>Passports and passport cards are also acceptable forms of identification that can be used instead of REAL IDs, and will continue to be even after regular licenses and state IDs will no longer be accepted. Other acceptable identification documents include Veteran Health Identification Cards, permanent resident cards and Department of Defense ID cards, <a href="#">among others</a>.</p> <p>In 2013, <a href="#">DHS announced</a> REAL ID requirements for air travelers would first take effect in 2016. But the enforcement for these requirements has been delayed several times, <a href="#">most recently in April 2021</a> when DHS pushed REAL ID enforcement back to its current deadline.</p> <p>At the time DHS announced the latest deadline extension, it said only 43% of state driver's licenses and IDs were REAL ID compliant.</p> <p>A March 2020 survey commissioned by the U.S. Travel Association found an estimated 83 million American adults (34%) say they do not have any form of TSA-accepted identification — REAL ID, passport or any other listed TSA-accepted document — once the deadline passes.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Snohomish Co. pandemic recovery efforts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/snohomish-county-pandemic-recovery-efforts/281-8c91df37-7675-4999-9f2f-e1ea7d03c13c">https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/snohomish-county-pandemic-recovery-efforts/281-8c91df37-7675-4999-9f2f-e1ea7d03c13c</a>
GIST	<p>SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. — Snohomish County will invest \$5.2 million in small businesses, entrepreneurs, and tourism as the area continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>County Executive Dave Somers announced the <a href="#">American Rescue Plan Act</a> investments Monday. Investments include creating the Small Business Innovation Assistance program and expanding the county's tourism marketing.</p> <p>"Small businesses are the backbone of our community and economy," Somers said. "They bring tens of thousands of jobs to our county, from entry-level positions to highly skilled workers. While we're seeing encouraging signs of recovery for our small businesses and workers, it's clear that there's more work to do.</p> <p>"With these investments, we can boost economic growth and innovation across our county, and help business owners and entrepreneurs build resiliency and thrive."</p> <p>Approximately 90% of businesses in the county have fewer than 20 employees. The county received more than 2,000 applications for recovery grants that were administered in 2020 using funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act.</p> <p>As economic recovery continues, unemployment in the county remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. A total of 13,226 people were unemployed in March, down from 15,663 in February, <a href="#">according to the latest data</a>.</p> <p>"These funds will go a long way to respond to concerns I've heard from small business owners," said Snohomish County Council Chair Megan Dunn. "Direct assistance is a critical investment to fortify small businesses and in turn also support the households that rely on those doors staying open."</p> <p>Meanwhile, there has been a slight uptick in reported COVID-19 cases in the county, with the <a href="#">latest data</a> showing a seven-day case rate of 112 per 100,000 residents between April 9-16. Snohomish County is not alone, with <a href="#">King</a>, Island, and Whatcom counties also seeing higher seven-day case rates.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Fire at homeless camp in downtown Seattle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/encampment-fire-in-downtown-seattle-causing-4-mile-long-backup-on-i-90">https://komonews.com/news/local/encampment-fire-in-downtown-seattle-causing-4-mile-long-backup-on-i-90</a>



GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A downtown homeless encampment fire is causing heavy traffic on the freeway Monday morning.</p> <p>A 4-mile-long backup formed along the right shoulder of eastbound I-90 near the on-ramp from northbound I-5 and Edgar Martinez Drive just after 6:15 a.m.</p> <p>The structure — in which three people were reportedly living — caught fire and spread to nearby brush, fire crews said. The Red Cross was contacted to help any displaced occupants and no injuries were reported.</p> <p>Firefighters battled the fire for almost four hours to ensure hot spots were extinguished.</p> <p>Authorities said the structure consisting of pallets and other materials that caught fire and spread to nearby brush.</p> <p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell's office responded to the encampment fire in a statement.  <i>With hundreds of encampments across Seattle, the City is working to deploy limited resources as efficiently and urgently as possible to address immediate needs, while also working closely with the Regional Homelessness Authority as they scale and administer homelessness outreach programs, shelter development, and other critical efforts to address the homelessness crisis.</i></p> <p><i>Looking at the map and the fire location, WSDOT property in this area extends about 100 feet from the freeway. As with many encampments across the City, it can be difficult to tell whether an encampment is solely on WSDOT property or whether it extends to City property.</i></p> <p><i>This is why the City is committed to cross-jurisdictional collaboration and continues to coordinate with WSDOT through regular weekly meetings, trash mitigation logistics, and planning when a removal is calendared.</i></p> <p><i>The nexus of public safety and encampment issues creates challenges for Seattle and the City's communities. That is why the Unified Care Team uses verified SFD and SPD data as part of the evaluation criteria when considering encampment response and removals.</i></p> <p><i>The HOPE Team continues to partner with KCRHA and outreach providers citywide to support people living unsheltered. In the first quarter of 2022, the HOPE Team made over 320 referrals to shelter from 51 different encampment locations in partnership with 21 outreach and service providers.</i></p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 UW develops Covid-19 vaccine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/university-of-washington-develops-covid-19-vaccine-south-korea-to-order-10m-doses">https://komonews.com/news/local/university-of-washington-develops-covid-19-vaccine-south-korea-to-order-10m-doses</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – The University of Washington has developed a COVID vaccine and will soon have it shipped overseas for use.</p> <p>The vaccine, called GPB510, was developed at the UW School of Medicine along with SK bioscience, which is leading the clinical development. The two are seeking South Korea authorization for use within a month.</p> <p>Development started when Seattle scientists looked to create a second-generation COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine would be effective at low doses, safe, simple to make on a large scale and stable without deep freezing.</p> <p>GPB510, fully approved by regulators, will be available through COVAX and South Korea has agreed to buy 10 million doses and UW said it is licensing the technology royalty-free throughout the pandemic.</p>

	<p>The vaccine has gone through trial Phase 3, which included 4,037 adults. The study showed the vaccine had more protective antibodies than the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine Vaxzevria.</p> <p>GPB510 also does not use mRNA, it is made of tiny protein particles studded with fragments of COVID-19.</p> <p>“These nanoparticles were designed by protein engineers at UW Medicine,” a release said. “Two biochemistry department labs at the UW School of Medicine, one led by David Veesler and the other by Neil King, headed the protein-based vaccine development. The King Lab pioneered the vaccine’s self-assembling protein technology and the Veesler Lab integrated a key fragment of the pandemic coronavirus Spike protein onto the nanoparticles.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<a href="#">You can find out more here.</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Judge blocks ending of Title 42 at border</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/federal-judge-grants-temporary-order-to-block-biden-from-ending-title-42-southern-border-us-mexico-louisiana-missouri-arizona-texas-joe-biden-migrants-immigrants-department-of-homeland-security">https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/federal-judge-grants-temporary-order-to-block-biden-from-ending-title-42-southern-border-us-mexico-louisiana-missouri-arizona-texas-joe-biden-migrants-immigrants-department-of-homeland-security</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (TND) — A federal judge in Louisiana has temporarily blocked the Biden administration from ending Title 42.</p> <p>The pandemic-era policy that allowed the federal government to quickly expel immigrants and asylum seekers at the southern border since March 2020 was scheduled to end on May 23.</p> <p>In the ruling, the judge sided with the <a href="#">21 states</a> who filed a lawsuit to protect the measure, arguing that there will be serious consequences if it expires.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security has previously predicted a surge of people arriving at the border once <a href="#">Title 42 ends</a>, saying it could see as many as 18,000 migrants a day.</p> <p>DHS also estimates that more than 170,000 migrants are waiting on the Mexican side of the border with plans to cross into the U.S. once Title 42 is lifted but the Biden administration says they are prepared for the influx.</p> <p>"The Department of Homeland Security has projected that there could be an increase in people coming to the border, and that's why they've had a six-part, multipart plan and proposal and policy they've been implementing for months now to prepare for that," White House press secretary <a href="#">Jen Psaki said</a> in a Monday briefing.</p> <p>At this time, it's not clear how long the temporary order will last and the Biden administration has not announced whether it will appeal the judge's decision. Psaki says it would be on Congress to extend the order.</p> <p>"Congress would have to take action in order for the date not to be May 23," she said.</p> <p>Congress is scheduled to be briefed on the Biden administration's plans for the border once that order expires. Those details have not been made public at this point.</p> <p>A group of Republican members of Congress spent the day in Eagle Pass, Texas, on Monday hoping to sound the alarm about the end of the policy. They spoke with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, National Guard members and other law enforcement.</p> <p>"If Title 42 is lifted, it will be much worse. It's not just unsustainable now. It will be uncontrollable and if a Democrat believes it should be lifted, come here and see what's happening before you make that decision," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Spokane gas prices jump \$.09 in last week</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/traffic/gas-prices/spokane-gas-prices/293-a2693763-512f-4384-97a3-f067b1c327ee">https://www.krem.com/article/traffic/gas-prices/spokane-gas-prices/293-a2693763-512f-4384-97a3-f067b1c327ee</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Spokane's gas prices have risen nearly 9 cents in the last week, according to a GasBuddy survey.</p> <p>GasBuddy surveyed 187 gas stations in Spokane and found that the average price per gallon is \$4.32 as of Monday. The cheapest gas in Spokane is priced at \$4.16 per gallon, while the most expensive is \$4.65, a difference of 49 cents per gallon.</p> <p>Gas prices in Spokane are currently 2.3 cents higher than one month ago and \$1.25 higher than this time a year ago, according to GasBuddy.</p> <p>As of April 24, the cheapest gas in Washington State was \$3.97 while the highest was \$5.49 per gallon.</p> <p>Neighboring states also saw an uptick in gas prices last week. In Idaho, the average gas price is \$4.40, up nearly 3 cents from the week prior.</p> <p>The national average gas price has risen 4.4 cents per gallon in the last week, according to GasBuddy. The average price of gas nationwide is currently \$4.11, 21 cents cheaper than Spokane's average gas price.</p> <p>This is the first time in more than a month that the national average gas price has increased, according to the head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy, Patrick De Haan. The rise can be attributed to oil prices increasing the week before last.</p> <p>"The rise has been quite tame in most areas, while others have continued to gently decline," De Haan said in a statement. "But, with the French election now behind us, there is risk that the EU could pursue harsher sanctions on Russia's energy, which could cause oil prices to rise if it happens - something motorists should be on the watch for."</p> <p>De Haan explained that U.S oil inventories are continuing to decline, which will put additional pressure on prices as the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) continues to drain.</p> <p>"The global imbalance between supply and demand that led to these higher prices continues for the time being," he explained.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 US toughens message on war in Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/26/world/ukraine-russia-war-news">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/26/world/ukraine-russia-war-news</a>
GIST	<p>Top U.S. defense officials are set to meet with NATO allies in Germany on Tuesday to whip up more military support for Ukraine that could help make it harder for Russian forces to rebuild their military capabilities after significant losses.</p> <p>Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III made the boldest U.S. comments yet about limiting Russia's capabilities on Monday after he and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine. Mr. Austin will try to convince dozens of military leaders on Tuesday that after two months of war, now is the time to expand support and make sure Russia is unable to quickly rebound.</p> <p>Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, responded by saying that delivering weapons to Ukraine meant NATO was "in essence" entering a proxy war with Russia and warned western countries that there was "considerable" risk of nuclear war.</p>

The British defense secretary supported Mr. Austin's assessment about Russian troop losses, saying Monday he believed that more than 15,000 soldiers had been killed so far.

Mr. Austin said the U.S. would "push as hard as we can as quickly as we can to get them what they need."

"They can win if they have the right equipment, the right support," he said of Ukraine. "And we're going to continue to do everything we can to ensure that that gets there."

In other developments:

- The State Department on Monday approved plans to supply Ukraine with \$165 million in artillery shells, rockets and grenades compatible with Soviet-designed weapons.
- President Biden appointed Bridget Brink to be the ambassador to Ukraine. Officials announced the U.S. embassy in Kyiv will reopen in a few weeks, after it was closed in February before the invasion.
- Russia fired missiles on at least five railway stations across central and western Ukraine early Monday, hours after Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin met Mr. Zelensky. The strikes were part of a broader assault aimed at crippling critical infrastructure in Ukraine.
- Explosions shook Transnistria, a Russia-aligned breakaway region of Moldova that borders Ukraine and where hundreds of Russian troops are deployed. Ukrainian defense officials accused Russia of causing the explosions as a pretext to invade Ukraine from the west.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Behind call 'weakened' Russia, hints of shift</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/ukraine-russia-us-dynamic.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/politics/ukraine-russia-us-dynamic.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — When Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III declared Monday at the end of a stealth visit to Ukraine that America's goal is to see Russia so "weakened" that it would no longer have the power to invade a neighboring state, he was acknowledging a transformation of the conflict, from a battle over control of Ukraine to one that pits Washington more directly against Moscow.</p> <p>President Biden entered the war insistent that he did not want to make this a contest between the United States and Russia. Rather, he was simply helping a small, struggling democracy defend itself against takeover by a far more powerful neighbor. "Direct confrontation between NATO and Russia is World War III, something we must strive to prevent," he said in early March, just two weeks into the war.</p> <p>He has committed to keeping American troops out of the fight, and has resisted imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine that would risk putting American and Russian forces into direct combat. Yet as Russian war atrocities have become more evident, and Ukraine's need for heavy armor has increased, the lines have grown blurrier and the rhetoric sharper. At the same time, in word and deed, the United States has been gradually pushing in the direction of undercutting the Russian military.</p> <p>It has imposed sanctions that were explicitly designed to stop Russia's military from developing and manufacturing new weapons. It has worked — with mixed success — to cut off the oil and gas revenues that drive its war machine.</p> <p>The immediate impetus for Mr. Austin's carefully orchestrated declaration that the United States wants "Russia weakened to the point where it can't do things like invade Ukraine," several administration officials said, was to set up President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine with what one senior State Department official called "the strongest possible hand" for what they expect will be some kind of cease-fire negotiations in coming months.</p>

But over the longer term, Mr. Austin's description of America's strategic goal is bound to reinforce President Vladimir V. Putin's oft-stated belief that the war is really about the West's desire to choke off Russian power and destabilize his government. And by casting the American goal as a weakened Russian military, Mr. Austin and others in the Biden administration are becoming more explicit about the future they see: years of continuous contest for power and influence with Moscow that in some ways resembles what President John F. Kennedy termed the "long twilight struggle" of the Cold War.

Mr. Austin's comments, bolstered by statements by Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken about the various ways in which Mr. Putin has "already lost" in the struggle over Ukraine, reflect a decision made by the Biden administration and its closest allies, several officials said on Monday, to talk more openly and optimistically about the possibility of Ukrainian victory in the next few months as the battle moves to the Russian-speaking south and east, where Mr. Putin's military should, in theory, have an advantage.

At a moment when American intelligence officials are reporting that Mr. Putin thinks he is winning the war, the strategy is to drive home the narrative that Russia's military adventure will be ruinous, and that it is a conflict Mr. Putin cannot afford to sustain.

But it is a strategy that carries some risks.

"There is a very narrow line to tread here," James Arroyo, a former senior British national security official who now serves as director of the Ditchley Foundation, a think tank that focuses on promoting democracy. "The risk is that 'degrade Russian military power' could easily shift into a degradation of Russia as a power generally — and that Putin will use that to stoke nationalism."

There is a second risk: that if Mr. Putin believes that his conventional military forces are being strangled, he will turn to stepped-up cyberattacks on Western infrastructure, chemical weapons or his arsenal of tactical, "battlefield" nuclear weapons. It is a possibility that was barely conceivable eight weeks ago, but is regularly discussed today.

"Given the potential desperation of President Putin and the Russian leadership, given the setback they've faced so far militarily, none of us can take lightly the threat posed by a potential resort to tactical nuclear weapons or low-yield nuclear weapons," William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, warned earlier this month.

He said the chances were low. But among the possible scenarios that American officials are examining is one in which Mr. Putin, frustrated by a lack of progress on the ground, detonates a "demonstration" blast over the Black Sea or in an unpopulated area as a warning shot for the West to back off.

But for all its public warnings — designed to defuse Mr. Putin's episodic nuclear threats — the White House is working to demonstrate publicly that Russia is emerging from the war in a far weaker position, militarily and economically, than it was on Feb. 24. That is the date when Mr. Putin ordered his forces to invade Ukraine from half a dozen directions in what he hoped would be a blitzkrieg move to decapitate the government. Instead, he was forced into a humiliating retreat, and is refocusing on the country's south and east, the Russian-speaking territory closest to its own borders.

The new focus should, in theory, favor the Russians. Their supply lines back to Russian territory are far shorter than they were when they sought to take Kyiv, where their tanks and armored personnel carriers, plodding down existing highways, became easy targets. The contested territory in Ukraine's south and east includes wide-open areas, more suited to Russian-style artillery barrages.

The trip by Mr. Austin and Mr. Blinken was scripted to make the case that while on paper the Russians have the advantage, the odds actually favor the Ukrainians, largely because they have the motivation to preserve their homeland.

"The first step in winning is believing you can win," said Philip M. Breedlove, who served as the supreme allied commander Europe, the top NATO military officer, until 2016. He added that he was glad of Mr.

Austin's language, even if it risked provoking Russia, because "the Ukrainians have to believe that we intend to give them what they need, because that is what will be required for them to win."

What they needed was heavy artillery, and as the Biden administration and other NATO nations have rushed to get that weaponry into Ukrainian hands, the Russians have become increasingly vocal in their warnings that the shipments themselves are an act of aggression — and could be targeted.

The artillery, however, can be justified as largely defense weaponry — they cannot strike far into Russia itself. But Mr. Austin's statement about keeping Russia from being able to invade anew, in Ukraine or elsewhere, articulated a strategy that has been hinted at, both in public statements and in the type of sanctions that the West has imposed on Russia in the past eight weeks.

The most damaging of those sanctions may be the export controls on high-tech components that the Russian defense industry needs to produce new weapons. Unlike China, America's other major adversary, Russia has limited capability to manufacture its own chips, and almost no prospect of developing that capability without Western technology.

Announcing some of those export controls in early March, Mr. Biden said his goal with Russia was to "sap its economic strength and weaken its military for years to come." Now there are anecdotal reports — eagerly amplified by the White House — of the Russian military-industrial complex running short of parts.

"The Russian high-tech and defense sectors are being choked off from key inputs," Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, told reporters as Mr. Biden headed to a meeting with NATO leaders a month ago. So far it is hard to measure the effects on actual weapons production, and it is unclear if the Russians will succeed in finding alternate sources of supply.

Administration officials deeply involved in the sanctions strategy say it was designed to get worse over time. As capital dries up for investment in new capability, as chip supplies dwindle and energy revenues decline, the squeeze will become more apparent. In time, it will bleed into consumer goods, making it harder for ordinary Russians to buy the iPhones and Androids that seem nearly as ubiquitous on the streets of Moscow as they are in New York.

Still, the question overhanging the strategy described by Mr. Austin is whether it can work. Every American president since Harry Truman has tried to squeeze the North Koreans with crushing sanctions; today, their nuclear arsenal is bigger than ever. Donald Trump often said that the 1,500 sanctions he placed on Iran would bring the country to the bargaining table, begging for a deal. They did not.

Mr. Biden's aides say they understand that sanctions alone cannot do the trick — what is needed is a highly coordinated mix of sanctions, military pressure and diplomacy. That is a difficult task with smaller states. With a country the size of Russia, armed with nuclear weapons, it becomes a far riskier proposition.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Travel to Canada easier for families</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260743792.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260743792.html</a>
GIST	<p>The ArriveCAN app is still required, but traveling to Canada just got easier for families, as the Canadian government announced that it is once again adjusting its COVID-19 border measures.</p> <p>Effective Monday, April 25, Canada will no longer require unvaccinated or partially vaccinated children between the ages of 5 and 11 who are accompanied by a fully vaccinated parent or guardian to complete a pre-entry COVID-19 test for entry, according to a release.</p> <p>Pre-entry tests still will be required for unvaccinated or partially vaccinated travelers 12 and older who are eligible to enter Canada, though, the release states. Children younger than 5, who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated, already were not required to be tested before arriving at the border.</p>



	<p>“The gradual easing of restrictions for travelers is part of our balanced and science-based approach to managing COVID-19 and its variants,” Canadian Minister of Transport Omar Alghabara said in the release. “Although some restrictions may be easing, air and rail travelers are reminded that they are still required to wear a mask throughout their travel journey. Wearing a mask offers an extra layer of protection for you and your fellow travelers, and will help keep Canadians, workers and our transportation system safe.”</p> <p>Additionally, Canada announced that fully vaccinated travelers will no longer be required to submit a quarantine plan when they enter, wear a mask while in public spaces, report if they develop COVID symptoms, quarantine if another traveler in their group shows COVID symptoms or tests positive, or maintain a list of close contacts and locations they visited.</p> <p>But using the ArriveCAN app to provide mandatory travel information within 72 hours of their arrival at a Canadian port of entry is still required, according to the release, which added that those that do not submit their information through the app won’t be eligible for the fully vaccinated traveler exemptions, may face delays at the border for health questioning and could be subject to fines or other enforcement actions.</p> <p>All travelers, regardless of vaccination status, also must continue to wear a mask through their entire travel journey, according to the release.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Gas heating commercial bldgs. restricted</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260745532.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260745532.html</a>
GIST	<p>After efforts to restrict the use of natural gas in future commercial building heating systems in Washington stalled in the Legislature, the state's Building Code Council adopted revisions to the state's energy code that require new businesses and apartments to mostly use heat pumps to warm air and water starting next year.</p> <p>The Spokesman-Review reported that the council approved the changes on an 11-3 vote Friday. The new rules take effect on July 1, 2023.</p> <p>Under the revised code, new commercial buildings would have to use heat pumps for space heating. The plan would effectively ban HVAC systems that use fossil fuels like natural gas – including most standard furnaces – or systems that use electric resistance, such as baseboard heaters, wall heaters, radiant heat systems and electric furnaces. Certain exceptions allow electric resistance to be used in specific situations as approved by a code official and some exceptions also would be allowed for space heating using a fossil fuel.</p> <p>For water heating, 50% of water must be warmed by a heat pump system, while the rest can be heated by an additional source like electric resistance or fossil fuels.</p> <p>In her vote to approve the code revisions, board member and executive director of Spokane’s Community Building Foundation Katy Sheehan voted cited the need to address climate change and a state-mandated goal of improving energy efficiency while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>"Taking a small step forward in reducing our natural gas usage is one way to reach our goal that we’re mandated to get to," she said.</p> <p>Board member and Spokane County Commissioner Al French voted no, saying it should ultimately be up to the Legislature to set the code.</p> <p>Associations representing builders opposed the limitations, citing challenges it would impose on construction and the electrical grid, while environmental advocates saw the changes as necessary to combat climate change.</p>



	Similar heat pump proposals are being made for the residential section of the state energy code, and will be considered by the council over the next few months.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Nurses sue King Co., Pioneer Health</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/nurses-suing-king-county-pioneer-human-services-after-alleged-sexual-assaults-by-clients/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/nurses-suing-king-county-pioneer-human-services-after-alleged-sexual-assaults-by-clients/</a>
GIST	<p>As a community health nurse working with dangerously mentally ill clients, Cari Dickson had plenty of scary experiences even before one man she was sent to check on pinned her to the floor of a tiny West Seattle apartment and tried to rape her in February 2021.</p> <p>Two Seattle police officers kicked down the door, tackled the man and carried Dickson to safety. Afterward, the officers were stunned to learn she had been sent to the man's apartment by herself.</p> <p>"They were like, 'Wait, you're a health care worker? You were sent here alone? We don't even go out alone. We always work in pairs. This is not OK,' " she said during a recent interview at her attorneys' downtown Seattle law offices.</p> <p>One of the officers told her, "I'm pretty sure there's a law against that," Dickson said.</p> <p>It turned out the officer was right.</p> <p>Attorneys Julie Kays and Cheryl Snow filed a civil lawsuit against King County and Pioneer Human Services last month on behalf of Dickson and another nurse who says she also was sexually assaulted by a client while both women were working separately for one of the county's Program for Assertive Community Treatment teams, known as PACT Teams.</p> <p>While Dickson wanted to be identified in hopes that sharing her story will encourage other women to come forward, her former co-worker, a psychiatric nurse practitioner now working in California, asked not to be named. The Seattle Times does not identify victims of sexual violence without their express consent.</p> <p>The women's lawsuit alleges King County and Pioneer Human Services, or PHS, violated the state's Law Against Discrimination by repeatedly subjecting female employees to gender-based discrimination in the workplace, including sexual harassment, assaults, sexual assaults, threats and stalking by clients who were hand-picked for the program from criminal and involuntary-commitment dockets in King County Superior Court.</p> <p>Safety concerns and requests to work in pairs were brushed off, and the women's working conditions "were increasingly hostile, toxic, dangerous and volatile," the lawsuit says.</p> <p>Though the county was aware of each client's criminal history and propensity for violence, that information wasn't shared with PHS PACT Team members, who were required to meet clients in their residences and drive them to appointments in the employees' personal vehicles, says the lawsuit.</p> <p>The lawsuit, which is seeking an unspecified amount in general and special damages, also claims King County and PHS violated <a href="#">Marty's Law</a>, a 2007 law that requires those who provide crisis care to dangerously mentally ill offenders work in pairs. It also bars retaliation against any worker who refuses to go on home visits alone.</p> <p>Marty's Law <a href="#">is named for Marty Smith</a>, a crisis responder for the state mental health system who was killed by a client during a home visit in Poulsbo on Nov. 4, 2005. His killer, Larry Clark, now 49, is serving a 30-year prison sentence.</p>

“Because King County and PHS blatantly ignored this critical safety law, it was commonplace for the County and PHS to send female PHS PACT Team workers out alone to the homes of dangerously mentally ill clients with no information on the dangers presented by these offenders,” the lawsuit says.

PHS, which at the time was one of four community-based mental and behavioral health providers contracted by the county to serve dangerously mentally ill clients, would end up dissolving its PACT Team six months after Dickson was attacked, according to Kays. She has yet to learn why the team was disbanded and expects that information to come to light during discovery as the lawsuit proceeds to trial.

An attorney representing Pioneer Human Services did not return a phone call seeking comment about the lawsuit. A spokesperson for King County Executive Dow Constantine declined to comment because the litigation is ongoing.

However, answers to the lawsuit filed in Pierce County Superior Court show that both King County and Pioneer Human Services have denied all allegations of negligence or wrongdoing. Both also have asserted a number of affirmative defenses, including that third parties — PACT clients — were at fault for any alleged damages suffered by the two nurses.

Holding an employer liable for conduct committed against an employee by a nonemployee was without precedent until [Sheila LaRose, a former King County public defender, sued King County in 2015](#) after she was stalked by a former client she had represented in a felony stalking case. Her case was bolstered when the state Court of Appeals adopted the federal standard that an employer may be held liable for the harassment of an employee by a nonemployee and reversed two dismissals.

A Pierce County jury in October awarded LaRose \$7 million in damages, but [King County has appealed](#).

In its answer to the nurses’ lawsuit, King County has adopted a similar argument as in the LaRose case, saying that the women’s damages were caused “by the intentional acts of persons ... acting outside the scope of any control by defendant or over whom defendant had no control, and defendant is, thus, not responsible for those intentional acts.”

#### **“Shaky and scared”**

In 2007, Washington state adopted the Assertive Community Treatment model, which was developed in Wisconsin in the early 1970s, as an outpatient service system to help people with serious mental health conditions move out of long-term state hospitals into community settings.

Funded by Medicaid and the state, the Washington State Health Care Authority designates the number of PACT Teams operating in each county.

Behavioral health providers are contracted by counties to provide PACT services to clients, and PHS became an independent contractor in 2017, according to King County’s answer to the nurses’ lawsuit.

The psychiatric nurse practitioner who asked not to be identified joined the Pioneer Human Services PACT Team in 2018 and Dickson joined in 2019. Their work tasks included delivering antipsychotic medications to clients.

In the first half of 2019, the psychiatric nurse practitioner went to Bruksos House, a housing project run by PHS on Capitol Hill where a number of PACT clients live.

The client she was sent to see had not consistently been taking his antipsychotic medications. When she arrived, she stepped into his room to explain his medications and, at his request, put his pills in her hand.

The man grabbed her wrist, licked the pills off her hand, threw her on the bed, got on top of her and groped her, she said. She fought him off and ran out the door.

“Afterward, I was feeling really shocked and terrified and shaky and scared,” said the nurse, who is now 42.

She didn’t report the attempted rape to police but told her supervisor what had happened.

“He said to me, ‘I’m not your therapist.’ And that was kind of the end of it,” she recalled in a phone interview.

Without her supervisor’s knowledge, she and another PACT Team member went to the man’s Department of Corrections community corrections officer and learned that the man who attacked her “did in fact have a very significant violent history, including a history of attempted sexual assaults on other women that had never been revealed to us.”

After leaving Seattle in June 2019, she went on to work for similar Assertive Community Treatment teams in Colorado and California, where she said workers routinely go in pairs to see clients with violent histories. But her experience in Seattle was traumatizing and has led her to feel unsafe at times, even when accompanied on home visits by another mental health professional.

“It’s damaged me and it’s damaged my work and left me in a place where I’m more vulnerable to just being scared sometimes, even when I don’t need to be,” she said.

### **Alone, attacked**

Dickson, 38, grew up in Montana and began her nursing career in Seattle in 2004, providing end-of-life care to children who had suffered traumatic brain injuries. She spent three years in Ethiopia, working at an orphanage for children who had lost their parents to HIV/AIDS. Upon her return to Seattle, she continued working in pediatrics.

Then, a few years ago, Dickson noticed the explosion in the city’s homeless population and decided to make a change.

“My heart would just go out to the people I saw on the streets so I quit my job,” she said.

She was hired by a temp agency and landed a three-month contract delivering medications to Pioneer Human Services PACT clients before accepting a full-time job on the PACT Team in June 2019.

Dickson was assigned to work downtown and in Pioneer Square, where clients suffering from severe mental illness and psychosis required the most intensive level of care.

“I would go oftentimes to homeless encampments and shelters and also transitional housing units,” Dickson said. “Another task I was really good at was drawing blood. ... I’ve drawn blood in alleyways and camps and it was a lot. I was always on the go.”

One time, Dickson was sent to the Morrison Hotel to draw a client’s blood and after he refused to accompany her to the lobby, she reluctantly went into his room. She had just inserted the needle into his arm when he leaned over her and said, “Do you like violence?”

On Feb. 19, 2021, Dickson visited more than a dozen clients and was wrapping up her day when her team leader asked her to check on a man who wasn’t on Dickson’s regular caseload. He appeared to be in crisis and Dickson was geographically closest to his apartment.

She stopped by a friend’s house to use the bathroom and mentioned to her friend that she didn’t have a good feeling about the visit, which was nearby.

Dickson met Marcus Francis outside his apartment building and suggested they get coffee at a nearby Starbucks. He told her he needed to grab his phone first, and she followed him inside the building. Dickson stood outside the door, but when Francis' roommate went to leave, she had to step into the apartment to let him pass — and Francis jumped up from where he was sitting on the bed and used his body to block the door.

“At that point, I don't remember what happens — it happened so fast. The next thing I remember is I'm on the floor, pinned. He's on top of me ... and he is suffocating me, he has his hand over my mouth and nose and he's pressing really hard. And he says, 'Who sent you to kill me?' ” Dickson said.

As the attack went on, Dickson fought him as he struggled to pull down her leggings. She was able to reach her phone and type garbled text messages with one hand, asking her friend to call 911.

Dickson said she remembers hearing sirens and the sounds of Seattle police officers forcing their way into Francis' building.

“OK, this is my chance, I'm going to fight as hard as I can and scream as loud as I can,” Dickson said she remembers thinking. “And so I did and so they were able to hear me and they banged on the door. They kicked it in and tackled him off of me and then a policeman picked me up and I still had my phone in my hand.”

Francis, 34, was charged with attempted second-degree rape but has not been found competent to stand trial, court records show.

His defense attorney declined to comment about his case.

Dickson suffered extensive bruising, muscles strains, a torn tendon in one shoulder and other injuries. She is also contending with post-traumatic stress disorder and hasn't worked since the attack.

“I'm really jumpy and I have nightmares and wake up screaming,” Dickson said. “I have two therapists and I'm doing all the right things, but it's such a strange place for me to be in because I've always seen myself as a nurse and loved being a nurse and now ... I can't even imagine myself working as a nurse again.”

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HEADLINE	04/25 King Co. 'medium' community Covid level
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/king-county-now-has-medium-community-level-of-covid-per-cdc-guidance/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/king-county-now-has-medium-community-level-of-covid-per-cdc-guidance/</a>
GIST	<p>King County has moved from a “low” community COVID-19 level to “medium,” per federal guidance, as infection rates increase, the county's top health officer said Monday.</p> <p>Despite the movement upward within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention community levels, there are no plans to reintroduce past mitigation requirements, such as an indoor masking mandate or vaccine checks.</p> <p>Case rates have slowly been ticking up in the county <a href="#">since the end of March</a>, after statewide mask mandates came to an end and as omicron's infectious subvariant, BA. 2, took hold. As of Monday, King County saw a 19% increase in cases compared to the prior week and was averaging a seven-day rate of about 214 new infections per 100,000 people, county health officer Dr. Jeff Duchin said during a news conference.</p> <p>“This was not unanticipated as the more contagious BA. 2 variant spread both locally and nationally,” Duchin said. “... The CDC medium risk category is not a magic threshold meaning the COVID-19 pandemic locally is suddenly or fundamentally different, or that we're approaching a crisis level. But it does tell us that COVID-19 infection risk is increasing for individuals and the community.”</p>

The CDC [measures community levels of COVID](#) by tracking seven-day case rates, seven-day hospitalization rates and the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID patients. The agency classifies counties as having low, medium or high community level of COVID.

Duchin acknowledged some potential discrepancies or delays between CDC and Public Health – Seattle & King County data because the federal agency reports new cases by the date the lab report was submitted, while the local health department tracks data by specimen collection date.

For example, King County is still listed as having a “low” community level on the CDC’s website, which is updated on Thursdays.

While infection rates are rising, they’re still much lower than they were during the region’s spike in omicron cases, Duchin said. During the winter, the county reported a seven-day infection rate of more than 2,100 new cases per 100,000 people.

“We should see this yellow traffic light as a ‘slow down’ and use this opportunity to lower our risk and the risk for those around us, and to think more about how we’ll manage the ongoing challenge of COVID-19 sustainably over the long term,” he said.

Hospitalizations and deaths remain at “stable, low levels,” Duchin said. Recently, the county reported an average of about two new COVID hospitalizations per 100,000 — compared with 19 per 100,000 in February.

In addition, COVID patients are taking up about 4% of staffed inpatient beds in King County — though Duchin noted hospitals are still “very full” with non-COVID needs, including managing a large number of delayed procedures and ongoing issues discharging patients from hospitals.

Statewide, [infection rates have seen a slight uptick](#), though the increase hasn’t yet translated to an increase in severe illness or deaths.

The CDC also maps [COVID transmission levels](#), which the CDC says it provides for health care facilities. The transmission map also assigns different counties with levels of risk (low, moderate, substantial and high), though its threshold for each level is lower than the community-level map’s criteria.

A county considered to be at high transmission risk, for example, would have more than 100 new cases per 100,000 people over seven days — while a county at high community-level risk would have more than 200 new cases per 100,000 (and would also take new hospitalizations into consideration).

Under the transmission map criteria, King County is considered to be at high risk.

Each map provides a slightly different perspective, Duchin said.

“If you’re a person who really just wants to know how much COVID is out there, how much spread is happening, I think the COVID transmission-level (map) ... gives you a little more information about how many COVID cases are out there,” he said. “If you’re more interested in the issue of, ‘What’s the overall impact determined by hospitalizations?’ then the [COVID community-level \(map\)](#) is probably more informative.”

Vaccinations and boosters remain important for reducing risk of severe illness, Duchin said, in addition to other mitigation measures, like wearing a high-quality mask and improving indoor air ventilation.

“The threat of COVID-19 has decreased substantially, but it has not disappeared,” Duchin said. “... I would expect ongoing ups and downs in the coming months and years based on what variants emerge, population immunity and other factors, so for this reason, let’s think about long-term sustainable COVID-19 prevention and treatment strategies as our top priority.”

HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Drought persistent in eastern Washington</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/drought-persistent-in-eastern-washington-as-rain-deficit-draws-concern-in-northwest/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/drought-persistent-in-eastern-washington-as-rain-deficit-draws-concern-in-northwest/</a>
GIST	<p>As drought season looms, Washington state appears to be faring better than its neighbors in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>But droughts are becoming longer and more intense, causing concern among researchers and experts that the accumulating impacts of stabilized dry seasons could lead to accelerated reductions in soil moisture, streamflow and snowpack.</p> <p>In the last 30 to 60 days, the region has seen below-average precipitation, especially in Idaho, western Montana, Eastern Oregon and northeast Washington, said Zach Hoylman, Montana assistant state climatologist, during a briefing Monday on the Northwest’s drought outlook.</p> <p>“These conditions, and long-term deficits, have contributed to further reductions in soil moisture, low stream flows — especially in the Oregon Cascades and in southern Idaho — and stable drought conditions.”</p> <p>Just over half of Washington is “abnormally dry” while 27% is experiencing severe droughts and nearly 7% is suffering from extreme drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, <a href="#">which was updated last week</a>. These are improvements from <a href="#">the same figures earlier this year</a>.</p> <p>Currently, seven counties in Washington state are experiencing extreme drought: Grant, Kittitas, Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Adams and Lincoln. Most surrounding areas are experiencing moderate or severe drought.</p> <p>While most of the eastern half of the state is experiencing varying degrees of drought, Western Washington remains protected.</p> <p>The 2022 Water Year — which began in October and ended Wednesday — was Washington’s 84th driest, or 45th wettest, according to the Climate Impacts Research Consortium, which is funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.</p> <p>According to the most recent figures from the Drought Monitor, more than 70% of the Pacific Northwest Drought Early Warning System is in drought, while 22.4% of the region is experiencing extreme or exceptional drought. Winter brought more water to Washington and Idaho but many parts of Oregon and Idaho recorded their driest three-month period on record between January and March.</p> <p>“Drought has been a persistent feature of this landscape for well over a year now,” Hoylman said.</p> <p>While precipitation was slightly greater than normal in Western Washington between February and April, it’s been “well above average” over the past month along the central stretch of the border shared by Washington and Oregon.</p> <p><a href="#">Storms in April helped the state’s snowpack jump from 80% of average levels to 96%</a>. This presented a challenge for farmers whose orchards and vineyards struggle under subfreezing temperatures, but an increase in snowpack will help bolster water resources in agricultural areas east of the Cascades.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Enrollment plummets at WA colleges</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/enrollment-plummets-at-washingtons-colleges-especially-among-men/">https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/enrollment-plummets-at-washingtons-colleges-especially-among-men/</a>



LONGVIEW — In 2019, Washington [created](#) one of the most generous college financial aid programs in the country. Compared with a program it replaced, the [Washington College Grant](#) allowed many more students to qualify for free or subsidized tuition. No longer would eligible students be denied aid because of caps tied to limited funds.

By all rights, the state's colleges should have seen a rush of applicants. Instead, enrollment plummeted.

Community and technical colleges experienced a combined 24% drop between fall 2019 and fall 2021. Public four-year institutions saw a collective drop in undergraduates of nearly 7% during that time period, with some schools' losses double or even triple that. Roughly 60,000 fewer students, in all, enrolled.

What happened, of course, was COVID-19, though education leaders are still untangling the reasons the pandemic kept students away. As colleges scramble for ways to boost their numbers, they are facing hard truths about higher education in this state — namely, lukewarm enthusiasm and a gender gap that has women outnumbering men at virtually every institution. At Lower Columbia College in Longview, for instance, the share of male students fell from 31% to 28% during the first year of the pandemic.

"We were a little stunned," said Lower Columbia President Chris Bailey.

The pandemic-caused drop in college enrollment is happening at universities across the nation, and so too is the gender gap, although it began developing decades before COVID showed up. Yet, Washington's issues with college seem to run deeper.

"We didn't have a college-going culture to begin with, and the pandemic has made it worse," said Paul Francis, executive director of Council of Presidents, which represents Washington's five public universities and The Evergreen State College.

While for years Seattle has prided itself on being one of the [most educated cities in the country](#), many credentialed residents hail from elsewhere. The state as a whole sends [fewer high school graduates](#) to college than the [national average](#), with Washington's rate, 60% of students within a year of leaving high school, falling about 6 percentage points short.

Before the pandemic, enrollment had grown slightly at Washington's four-year institutions over the past decade. But the state's 34 community and technical colleges — whose enrollment tends to rise when the economy is bad, as laid-off workers go back to school, and fall when good — have seen a steady decline since 2010, when the last recession started to wane.

"There are very serious long-term negative impacts," said Michael Meotti, executive director of the Washington Student Achievement Council, a state agency that works to increase educational achievement. There's ample evidence, he said, that college-educated workers earn more and withstand economic downturns better.

Within 14 years after graduating from high school, those who get a bachelor's degree or higher earn on average \$24,000 more a year than those who don't, according to [state data](#). An associate degree or career certificate offers a \$4,000 bump.

There's not a clear understanding of what's behind Washington's lackluster college attendance, nor the gender gap. "The challenge around men is something that the entire higher education community is trying to figure out," said Jan Yoshiwara, executive director of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Theories abound, tapping into the state's blue-collar roots, notions of masculinity and changing ideas about college in the internet age. That's apart from oft-heard complaints about the spiraling college costs and student debt, and a conservative critique of campuses as bastions of snowflake liberalism.

The Washington Roundtable, a business group, is launching a study to get to the bottom of what's going on, said its vice president, Neil Strege.

Certainly, college is not for everyone, and many essential jobs don't require higher education, as the pandemic has shown. Some of them pay better than ever amid the current labor shortage. Even as male college attendance declines, men still earn more on average than women and hold more positions of power.

Other jobs do require college, but should they? Some argue that college has become an unquestioned and unnecessary sorting mechanism.

Strege looks at the here and now, or at least the near future. The Roundtable estimates 70% of a projected 373,000 new jobs in Washington over the next five years will require some form of postsecondary education, whether it be a B.A. or trade industry certification.

Amazon, Microsoft and other big local employers can import talent from elsewhere in the country and world, as they have been doing. Still, Strege said: "Our business people, they live here, they're operating their businesses here, they're raising their families here. They want Washington students to have an opportunity for those jobs."

#### **"Everybody seems to be hiring"**

The meteoric rise of high-tech can make people forget which industries long dominated the state: timber, agriculture, Boeing-based aerospace manufacturing, businesses linked to the port. "The state of Washington is historically a working class place," said Margaret O'Mara, a University of Washington historian who studies labor and the economy. Heavily unionized, workers could earn a good living straight out of high school.

"There's still a very significant chunk of our workforce that is doing blue-collar work," she added. High-tech has even contributed to it, its surge of transplanted workers fueling a construction boom.

During the pandemic, work seemed more essential than college for some. "I need to help support my family," Francisco Ramos said he heard at several Seattle high schools where he works as an outreach specialist for the [Seattle Promise program](#), offering two years of [free community college tuition](#) and mentorship to all of the seniors graduating from the city's public schools.

Parents or other family members have been laid off. They have gotten sick. The economic fallout especially affects the population served by community and technical colleges, which is lower income and more diverse than four-year institutions, said Yoshiwara, of the system's board.

But Francis, of the Council of Presidents, said he believes that economic reality has also driven enrollment declines at four-year schools — particularly because the pandemic has hyper-charged the job market for those without college degrees.

"Everybody seems to be hiring and nobody can get the workers," said Brian Wood, director of support services for Nippon Dynawave Packaging, a large paper mill on Industrial Way in Longview, which lies along the Columbia River bordering Oregon. Behind Wood were factory stacks sending steam into the sky, part of the landscape along Industrial Way, along with other mills, piles of logs and "now hiring" signs.

Trucking companies, desperate for drivers, are advertising jobs paying \$85,000, noted Bailey, of Lower Columbia College (though most truck drivers earn far less, according to the most recent [data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). The school is trying to capitalize on the demand by expanding a commercial driver's program. It is also trying to get the message out that even some blue-collar jobs now require computer and other skills that colleges teach, skills that can increase long-term earning power and options.

That brought Edwar Guzman to Lower Columbia, whose campus of brick buildings sprawls across 39 acres. The 19-year-old said he's in a program teaching him how to repair high-end, computerized cars. "I wanted more knowledge to get more money," he said, estimating he can earn up to \$40 an hour after he graduates, twice as much as he would earn straight out of high school.

In the past few years, Lower Columbia outreach workers have developed close relationships with high school counselors and regularly visit classes, focusing on "dual credit" courses allowing high school students free college credit.

"Does anyone know how many credits they get for this class?" Alyssa Wittrock asked students in an early childhood education class one Friday. Fifteen college credits, she told them, a quarter's worth. If they go on to college, they've just saved themselves three months and roughly \$1,400.

An automotive class is up next. All the students are young men, many of whom take several trade classes a day in a large work space where construction of a car in the style of a 1923 Model T is currently underway.

"Come to LCC. Join the automotive program," Wittrock urged students. Or go to another college, she said, trying to encourage higher education in general.

Afterward, Joshua Hilker, a senior who is president of the school's auto and welding club, said he is still leaning toward going into carpentry straight from high school. "They make good money and it's decently easy," he said, estimating he could earn up to \$34 an hour within a year and a half.

His friend Sean Barton, another senior, said he plans to see what the working world has to offer. In a year, he might go to college to study engineering. But careers that didn't require college could be rewarding as well, he said.

"If you go to work for someone else, you're going to work yourself to death," Barton said of manual labor. The trick, he said, is to start your own business, to take things into your own hands.

### **School as "unmanly"**

Judging by the numbers, more men than women clearly seem to think they can make it without college. The degree of gender lopsidedness varies by school.

At the UW, men comprise 46% of all undergraduates and just 40% of this year's freshman class on the Seattle campus. The percentage of men is even lower at The Evergreen State College, 39%.

At community and technical colleges, men make up 42% of students system-wide (excluding students whose gender was not reported or who didn't identify as men or women) — and 35% or lower at six schools, including Highline College, Tacoma Community College and Lower Columbia College.

One way to explain the college gender gap is to look at who's traditionally held the highest-paying blue-collar jobs: men, particularly white men. Women haven't had the same kind of access to those jobs, observed Meotti, of the Achievement Council. The equivalent type of jobs women have pursued, such as a health care technician position, usually require some kind of credentialing, he said.

College is now less exclusive than it was in the days when white men dominated, perhaps contributing to its societal depreciation, UW historian O'Mara speculated. A converse principle also holds, she noted. Consider: Computer programming, [originally the domain of women](#), wasn't considered worthy of huge salaries and prestige until men got involved.

Edward Morris, a University of Kentucky sociologist, talked to a lot of male high school students for a [2012 book](#) on gender and education. "A lot of them just experienced what was required in school as being unmanly," he said, most noticeably among young men whose parents were low-income or had not been to college.

Reading, homework, Morris said, “all that type of stuff was associated with inert activities. Whereas doing something like building a shed, that was something seen as useful” — as were science-related fields, which may help explain men’s preferences when they do attend college.

The vast majority of teachers are women, which also may have something to do with male views of education, Morris allowed.

He sees another factor as influential: the traditional image of men as risk-takers. “Breaking rules is something that is seen as kind of demonstrating masculinity,” Morris said. That could be getting in trouble at school, refusing to wear a motorcycle helmet or smoking in the face of countless health warnings. Or it could be circumventing college and striking out on your own.

Internet culture has stoked the allure of risk-taking. “You don’t need to have a piece of paper to make money — you know, that kind of idea is now being pushed, especially among young people,” said 19-year-old Zaidan Shibuya. On social media, one can find out about various moneymaking “side hustles,” as he and two of his housemates called them, and they have dabbled in them.

Still, they had decided to enroll in Seattle Central College, in part because higher education was important to their immigrant parents. “We came to this country for you to receive a higher education and become something,” Salih Mamme said, expressing the view of his parents, who came from Ethiopia. Mamme was upset when he had to drop out of Seattle Central recently for financial reasons.

The three debated whether they could get a job in their field — computer science — without a college education. Maybe they could do a six-month coding boot camp, Shibuya said. However “Companies that are paying you six figures-plus, they still want a degree,” he said, and he plans to go on to a four-year school.

None was troubled by being outnumbered by women on campus, not even a fourth housemate in a Seattle Central nursing program, where the gender ratio skews especially female. That housemate, Spencer Kneass, said he paid more attention to age; many of his classmates are in their 30s.

The other three hadn’t really noticed the overall gender ratio because their computer science classes are mostly men, reflecting the different paths many men and women take once in college.

“Now that you mention it,” said Abdikarim Salah, thinking about who he comes across outside of his classes, “I do see more women.”

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HEADLINE	04/26 Germany policy shift over Ukraine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/world/germany-authorize-tank-shipment-ukraine-russia-war">https://www.foxnews.com/world/germany-authorize-tank-shipment-ukraine-russia-war</a>
GIST	<p>Germany authorized the shipment of anti-aircraft tanks to Ukraine on Tuesday, showing a policy shift after months of German leaders blocking the sale.</p> <p>German Chancellor Olaf Scholz <a href="#">has come under fire</a> from political rivals and even members of his coalition government for a lack of action in support of Ukraine. The new sale, which will be formally announced later Tuesday, provides Gepard anti-aircraft tanks as well as various anti-tank weapons, according to the <a href="#">Agence France Presse</a>.</p> <p>German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht will announce the offer during a meeting with NATO and other Ukrainian allies at the U.S. Ramstein Air Base in Germany.</p> <p>Scholz first blocked the sale of heavy weapons to Ukraine in February, arguing such a move would escalate tensions with Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p>

	<p>Ukraine has solicited help from any nation that will listen since Russia first invaded the country at the end of February. The U.S. and NATO allies have supplied hundreds of millions of dollars in military and humanitarian aide to the country.</p> <p>Ukraine <a href="#">announced a deal last week</a> in which companies from the Czech Republic will repair Ukrainian vehicles damaged in the conflict.</p> <p>The program is focused primarily on refitting Soviet-era T-64 tanks, although the program plans to expand to include BRD and BRDM-type vehicles as well.</p> <p>Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin <a href="#">returned from their first trip to Ukraine</a> since the invasion on Monday. Austin stated that Russia had already lost much of its military capability in Ukraine, and Blinken called for Russia to be "weakened" further.</p> <p>"We want to see Ukraine remain a sovereign country, a democratic country, able to protect its sovereign territory," Austin said. "We want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Blasts rock Moldova; Russia target?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/world/moldova-explosions-russia-next-target">https://www.foxnews.com/world/moldova-explosions-russia-next-target</a>
GIST	<p>Authorities in Moldova are gathering Tuesday for an urgent security meeting following a series of blasts in a <a href="#">Russia-aligned separatist region</a>, just days after one of Vladimir Putin's generals suggested that country could be the next target of Moscow's military aggression in eastern Europe.</p> <p>At least two blasts this morning targeted radio antennas that broadcast Russian programs in Maiac, a town around seven miles from Moldova's border with Ukraine, according to officials in the Trans-Dniester region.</p> <p>They come a day after several explosions believed to be caused by rocket-propelled grenades were reported to have hit the Ministry of State Security in the city of Tiraspol, the region's capital.</p> <p>The Security Council of Trans-Dniester on Tuesday also reported damage to a military unit in the village of Parcani. They did not offer further details on that incident, but declared "a red level of terrorist threat" and promised to impose additional security measures in the region.</p> <p>The Kremlin is aware of the explosions in Trans-Dniester, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying Tuesday that the situation "elicits concern" at the highest levels of Russian government.</p> <p>Moldovan President Maia Sandu, in response, has called for a meeting Tuesday of the country's Supreme Security Council.</p> <p>Last week, Russian Major Gen. Rustam Minnekaev <a href="#">claimed that Russia's ambitions in Ukraine extend outside the Donbas region</a> and stretch across the country's southern districts.</p> <p>"Control over the south of Ukraine is another way out to Trans-Dniester, where there are cases of Russian-speaking people being oppressed," Minnekaev said, in an apparent threat to Moldova.</p> <p>Trans-Dniester, a strip of land with about 470,000 people between Moldova and Ukraine, has been under the control of separatist authorities since a 1992 war with Moldova.</p> <p>Though a peace treaty between Trans-Dniester and the Moldovan government has been in place, the breakaway state has similarities to the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics in the Donbas region of Ukraine, which served as Putin's justification for his illegal invasion in February.</p>

	Russia bases about 1,500 troops in Trans-Dniester, nominally as peacekeepers, but concerns are high that the forces could be used to invade Ukraine.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Millions of Covid shots to go as waste</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/millions-covid-19-shots-set-waste-vaccine-rollout/story?id=84111412">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/millions-covid-19-shots-set-waste-vaccine-rollout/story?id=84111412</a>
GIST	<p>While top U.S. health officials are urging some Americans to get yet another coronavirus booster shot, local health departments across the country are grappling with a growing dilemma -- how to address a declining demand for vaccines, while minimizing the waste of unused millions of doses currently in state stockpiles and at risk of expiring.</p> <p>Since the emergency use authorization of the first COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. last winter, federal data shows that states received a staggering 720 million doses, and more than 570 million of those shots have been administered.</p> <p>However, an ABC News analysis of state-provided data found that millions of those shots have not ended up in arms, largely due to a significant decline in the number of individuals willing to get vaccinated — with many vaccine doses now left unused in refrigerators or discarded in trash cans across the country.</p> <p>ABC News contacted officials from health departments in all 50 states, and in analyzing state provided data, found that millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses have either gone to waste, remain unused, or will expire in the coming weeks and months.</p> <p>"It is a tremendous loss of opportunity for these vaccines to not make it into the shoulders of those who need them," C. Buddy Creech, director of the Vanderbilt Vaccine Research Program and associate professor of pediatric infectious diseases, told ABC News. "Not only is it a financial loss for the purchaser of vaccines -- the U.S. government -- but also a significant health loss for those who are not yet protected from COVID and its complications."</p> <p><b>How some states are working to ensure shots don't go unused</b></p> <p>Although the total number of vaccines at risk of being wasted is not publicly accessible in every state, available data provides insight into some states' efforts to ensure the shots do not go unused.</p> <p>"We have worked with local public health to fill orders for vaccine from providers with existing inventory versus ordering new doses, and to redistribute vaccine with soon to expire dates to use up inventory within the state before we order more with longer expiration dates," Lynn Sutfin, spokesperson for the Michigan Department of Health told ABC News. "Our field reps are moving vaccines across the state to help redistribute as needed to avoid wastage."</p> <p>In Michigan, about 1.7 million doses have been wasted since Dec. 2020, and more than 100,000 more doses are set to expire in the next two weeks.</p> <p>Vaccine dose wastage can result from a variety of issues, including dropped vials and syringes; and improperly prepared, unused, or expiring vaccine doses, various officials reported.</p> <p>"Most of the wasted or unused doses are reported because a provider punctures a multidose vial in order to give someone a vaccine but does not necessarily have enough people to give the remaining doses before the vial expires," a representative for the State Joint Information Center in Colorado, where more than 619,000 doses have been unused, told ABC News. "This is aligned with CDC's best practices that advise providers to not miss any opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person."</p> <p>In large states like California, where more than 70% of residents are fully vaccinated, nearly 3.6 million shots are sitting in the state's stockpile, according to state data.</p>



Similarly, in North Carolina, where 60% of residents have completed their primary vaccination series, 856,000 shots are currently available under state inventory, while 1.7 million shots have been wasted after the doses expired or were improperly opened.

Nearly 760,000 vaccine doses have been designated as non-viable, spoiled, or expired, officials in Oregon reported, but officials told ABC News that such totals are "not unexpected."

"As demand for vaccines wanes, we expect there to be a similar drop in the number of doses vaccine providers request and, as a result, a decrease in the number of unused doses. Oregon will be left with excess inventory, but we believe that we have done everything we can to minimize waste," a representative for the Oregon Health Authority told ABC News.

Many states ordered hundreds of thousands of vaccine doses in bulk in order to ensure they had enough shots to meet demand, but in many cases, the need turned out to not be as high as initially expected.

Although the total number of shots wasted in states was high, many state organizers stressed that the overall percentage of wasted doses was relatively low, in comparison to the number of shots provided to residents.

Officials said they continue to work to minimize wastage by controlling the amount of vaccine that is ordered and shipped to the state, and by redistributing vaccine when possible within the state.

### **55 million eligible Americans still without a shot**

Last spring, millions of Americans flocked to COVID-19 vaccination clinics across the country to get their shots. In April of 2021, when every adult became eligible to get vaccinated, more than two million people were getting their first doses every day.

Overall, more than 220 million Americans have received a shot, representing about two-thirds of the U.S. population. Earlier this month, a new study from The Commonwealth Fund found that the U.S. COVID-19 vaccine program is now estimated to have prevented 2.2 million deaths, 17 million hospitalizations and 66.1 million additional infections through March 2022.

Now, a little less than a year later, with those most eager to get the shots now inoculated, vaccination rates have plummeted, federal data shows. A sizable group of more than 55 million eligible Americans remain unvaccinated against the virus.

"The pool of people that are unvaccinated is likely to remain unconvinced of the importance of vaccine-induced protection," Dr. John Brownstein, an epidemiologist at Boston Children's Hospital and an ABC News contributor, said, adding that convincing those still hesitant to get the shot will be a difficult feat.

In recent weeks, following the introduction of a fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose for some older and high-risk populations, there has been a slight uptick in the overall number of doses administered. However, the number of Americans initiating vaccination remains at a near record low of just over 50,000 Americans getting their first dose every day.

"Efforts including incentives, improved convenience, mandates and targeted public health messaging during a surge have all had various successes in increasing vaccination rates. It's hard to imagine what might influence someone to change their stance especially with cases at low levels and restrictions being lifted," Brownstein said.

Dr. Stephen Morse, an epidemiologist at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, described the waste of millions of COVID-19 doses in the U.S. as a "tragic combination of events."

"The vaccine development was both one of the miraculous triumphs and one of the tragedies of the COVID response," Morse told ABC News, further referencing a combination of factors to blame,

including vaccine nationalism, in which wealthy countries, such as the U.S., pre-ordered large quantities of the shots, making less vaccine available for the rest of the world, and persistent issues with vaccine hesitancy.

"We naïvely underestimated the extent of vaccine hesitancy and resistance, some driven by what WHO called the 'infodemic' of misinformation and disinformation, which persists to this day," Morse said.

### **Vaccine access and wastage a stark reminder of privilege**

Some politicians and public health experts have raised concerns over the ethical implications of so many shots going to waste.

"The wastage of millions of doses is a stark reminder of the privilege we have had in accessing vaccines while the majority of the world had to wait months. Extraordinary resources and financial investment will ultimately go to waste," Brownstein said.

Delaware Sen. Chris Coons warned last week that millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses, which were set to be shipped overseas, could expire, without proper funding from Congress.

"I was so disappointed that we, in Congress, could not come together and deliver critically needed global help to deliver the vaccines that we've already invented, developed and purchased, and to make sure that the nearly 3 billion people around the world who haven't yet had a single vaccine dose get some protection against this pandemic," Coons told CBS' "Face the Nation."

"We'll negotiate what we have to in order to secure a chance to move forward and not waste the vital vaccines America has already purchased," Coons added.

There may be additional ethical concerns about not donating enough shots to ensure that people can receive a full vaccination series.

"There are significant operational and potentially ethical issues around donating vaccines to other countries; is it ethical to donate the first dose when there is no guarantee of a second? What if the vaccine has not yet been approved in that country? Given how rigorously we regulate and authorize vaccines around the world, it is likely no surprise that the process of donating vaccines can become complicated very quickly," Creech added.

Even if states wanted to donate their stockpiles to other countries in need, with so many doses left unused in the U.S., Brownstein explained that logistically, such donations would be near impossible.

"Once a vaccine ends up at a site, it is administered or thrown out. There is usually no third option of sending it to another site and even lower chance it could go to another state let alone another country," Brownstein said. "These expired doses are a reminder of our challenged logistical platforms. While we optimized for distribution to vaccination sites, there was very little capacity to shift supply especially across jurisdictions."

A continued concern for many health experts is vaccinating the rest of the globe, as they say the pandemic will never truly subside until vaccine-use is widespread and equitable.

"Assuming we won't get immediate supply for most of the world, the best solution might be to retest and determine if we can legitimately extend shelf life," Morse said, adding that he does not believe donating short-dated doses is realistic.

"We certainly should intensify efforts to provide vaccine now to those who, for some reason, haven't yet been vaccinated and may now be willing to take it if vaccine is easily available," Morse said.

"Unfortunately, in the U.S., I fear we've reached diminishing returns by now. It would have been far better if everyone had gotten two doses early on, which might have slowed the virus down."

HEADLINE	<b>04/26 NKorea Kim vows to bolster nuke capability</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/koreas-kim-vows-bolster-nuke-capability-parade-84310231">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/koreas-kim-vows-bolster-nuke-capability-parade-84310231</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to accelerate the development of nuclear weapons and threatened to use them if provoked in a speech he delivered at a military parade that featured powerful missiles capable of targeting the country's rivals, state media reported Tuesday.</p> <p>Kim's remarks suggest he will continue provocative weapons tests in a pressure campaign aimed at wresting concessions from the United States and its allies. The parade Monday night marked the 90th anniversary of North Korea's army — the backbone of the Kim family's authoritarian rule — and was held as the country's economy is battered by pandemic-related difficulties, punishing U.S.-led sanctions and its own mismanagement.</p> <p>State media photos showed Kim, dressed in a white military ceremonial coat, smiling and waving from a balcony along with his wife Ri Sol Ju and top deputies.</p> <p>“(We) will continue to take measures for further developing the nuclear forces of our state at the fastest possible speed,” Kim told his troops and the crowd gathered at a plaza in Pyongyang, the capital, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.</p> <p>He said North Korea could preemptively use its nuclear weapons when threatened by attacks and called for his nuclear forces to be fully prepared to go “in motion at any time.”</p> <p>“The fundamental mission of our nuclear forces is to deter a war, but our nukes can never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent even at a time when a situation we are not desirous of at all is created on this land,” Kim said. “If any forces try to violate the fundamental interests of our state, our nuclear forces will have to decisively accomplish its unexpected second mission,” which would leave any invading force “perished,” he said.</p> <p>The parade featured thousands of goose-stepping troops and several of North Korea's most powerful missiles. Some of the intercontinental ballistic missiles could put the U.S. homeland well within range, and a variety of shorter-range solid-fuel missiles pose a growing threat to South Korea and Japan.</p> <p>One of the weapons showcased at the brightly illuminated Kim Il Sung Square, named after Kim's late grandfather and state founder, was North Korea's biggest and newest ICBM, the Hwasong-17.</p> <p>North Korea claimed to have test-fired that missile successfully last month, but South Korea concluded the launch was of the smaller Hwasong-15 and that a launch of the Hwasong-17 had failed. Whichever weapon it was, the launch on March 24 was North Korea's first full-range ICBM flight test in more than four years and flew longer and higher than any other missile North Korea has previously launched.</p> <p>KCNA said spectators at the parade raised loud cheers when they saw the Hwasong-17, which it said showed “the absolute power of Juche (self-reliance), Korea and the strategic position of our republic to the world.”</p> <p>North Korea often commemorates key state anniversaries by mobilizing huge crowds to boost internal unity. Tuesday's KCNA dispatch praised Kim for accomplishing “the historic great cause of completing the nuclear forces by making a long journey of patriotic devotion with a death-defying will” to make his people free of war.</p> <p>Kim has been reviving nuclear brinkmanship aimed at forcing the United States to accept North Korea as a nuclear power and to remove crippling economic sanctions, exploiting a favorable environment to push forward its weapons program as the U.N. Security Council remains divided over Russia's war in Ukraine.</p>

Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have been stalled since 2019 because of disagreements over a potential easing of U.S.-led sanctions in exchange for North Korean disarmament steps. Kim has stuck to his goals of simultaneously developing nuclear weapons and the country's dismal economy in the face of international pressure and has shown no willingness to fully surrender a nuclear arsenal he sees as his biggest guarantee of survival.

Kim's comments about the possible use of nuclear weapons and his decision to attend the parade in a military coat, rather than his regular suit and tie, signal a tough approach toward South Korea's incoming conservative government, which may take a harder line toward Pyongyang than current liberal President Moon Jae-in, according to analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at South Korea's Sejong Institute.

Calls by Kim for his people to brace for long-term confrontation with "imperialists" show he has no immediate plan to re-engage in denuclearization talks with the United States as he monitors the geopolitical fallout of the Russia-Ukraine war and the rivalry between the U.S. and China, Cheong said.

South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol, who takes office on May 10, has accused Moon of seeking engagement with North Korea while ignoring a gathering North Korean threat. He has vowed to strengthen South Korea's defenses in conjunction with its alliance with the U.S., including enhancing preemptive strike capabilities.

"North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles have become a serious and realistic threat for our country and acquiring an ability to deter (the North's threat) is an urgent task," Yoon's office said in a statement.

North Korea has conducted 13 rounds of weapons tests this year. There are also signs North Korea is rebuilding tunnels at a nuclear testing ground that was last active in 2017, possibly in preparation for exploding a nuclear device.

In 2017, North Korea claimed to have acquired the ability to launch nuclear strikes on the U.S. mainland after a torrid run of nuclear and missile tests. It halted such high-profile tests before entering its now-dormant diplomacy with the United States.

Kim's aggressive military push could also be motivated by domestic politics since he doesn't otherwise have significant accomplishments to show to his people as he marks a decade in power. He failed to win badly needed sanctions relief from his talks with then-President Donald Trump, and the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed further shocks to the country's broken economy, forcing him to acknowledge last year that North Korea was facing its "worst-ever situation."

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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Russia diplomat warns Ukraine of WWII</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/top-russian-diplomat-warns-ukraine-provoking-wwiii-84309079">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/top-russian-diplomat-warns-ukraine-provoking-wwiii-84309079</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Russia's top diplomat warned Ukraine against provoking World War III and said the threat of a nuclear conflict "should not be underestimated" as his country unleashed attacks against rail and fuel installations far from the front lines of Moscow's new eastern offensive.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the British Defense Ministry said Tuesday that Russian forces had taken the Ukrainian city of Kreminna in the Luhansk region after days of street-to-street fighting.</p> <p>"The city of Kreminna has reportedly fallen and heavy fighting is reported south of Izium as Russian forces attempt to advance towards the cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk from the north and east," the British military said in a tweet. It did not say how it knew the city, 575 kilometers (355 miles) southeast of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, had fallen. The Ukrainian government did not immediately comment.</p>

Ukraine's General Staff said Russian forces were shelling Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, as they fought to take full control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which comprise the Donbas in Ukraine's industrial heartland, and establish a land corridor to Crimea.

In the area of Velyka Oleksandrivka, a village in the Kherson region largely controlled by Russians, Ukrainian forces destroyed an ammunition depot and "eliminated" more than 70 Russian troops, the General Staff said.

The governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Haidai, said on the messaging app Telegram that the Russians had shelled civilians 17 times over the previous 24 hours, with the cities of Popasna, Lysychansk and Girske suffering the most.

Four people died and nine more were wounded on Monday in the Russian shelling of the Donetsk region, its governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said on Telegram. He said a 9-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy were among those killed.

The U.S. has been rushing more weaponry to Ukraine and said the assistance from Western allies is making a difference in the 2-month-old war.

"Russia is failing. Ukraine is succeeding," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared Monday after he and the U.S. secretary of defense made a bold visit to Kyiv to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Blinken said Washington approved a \$165 million sale of ammunition — non-U.S. ammo, mainly if not entirely for Ukraine's Soviet-era weapons — and will also provide more than \$300 million in financing to buy more supplies.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin went further, saying the U.S. wants to see Ukraine remain a sovereign, democratic country, but also wants "to see Russia weakened to the point where it can't do things like invade Ukraine."

Austin's remarks appeared to represent a shift in U.S. strategic goals since earlier Washington said the goal of American military aid was to help Ukraine win and to defend Ukraine's NATO neighbors against Russian threats.

In an apparent response to Austin, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia has "a feeling that the West wants Ukraine to continue to fight and, as it seems to them, wear out, exhaust the Russian army and the Russian military industrial war complex. This is an illusion."

Weapons supplied by Western countries "will be a legitimate target," said Lavrov, who accused Ukrainian leaders of provoking Russia by asking NATO to become involved in the conflict. NATO forces are "pouring oil on the fire," Lavrov said, according to a transcript on the Russian Foreign Ministry's website.

"Everyone is reciting incantations that in no case can we allow World War III," he said in a Russian television interview.

Lavrov said he would not want to see risks of a nuclear confrontation "artificially inflated now, when the risks are rather significant."

"The danger is serious," he said. "It is real. It should not be underestimated."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter that Lavrov's comments underscore Ukraine's need for Western help: "Russia loses last hope to scare the world off supporting Ukraine. Thus the talk of a 'real' danger of WWII. This only means Moscow senses defeat in Ukraine."

When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, its apparent goal was to seize Kyiv, the capital. But the Ukrainians, helped by Western weapons, forced President Vladimir Putin's troops to retreat.

Moscow now says its goal is to take the Donbas, the mostly Russian-speaking industrial region in eastern Ukraine, where residents are struggling to survive without many of the basics, collecting rainwater for cleaning and washing up and fervently hoping for an end to the fighting.

"When you open a plastic bottle and it makes a crackling sound, you are worried at once (thinking that it's an explosion) because of all those blasts. Anything that is happening, any noise, if our neighbours bang the door, a metal door, you are startled," said Andriy Cheromushkin, a resident of Toretsk, a small city south of Kramatorsk.

"It's bad. Very bad. Hopeless," he said. "You feel so helpless that you don't know what you should do or shouldn't do. Because if you want to do something, you need some money; and there is no money now."

On Monday, Russia was focusing its firepower beyond the Donbas, with missiles and warplanes striking far behind the front lines to try to thwart Ukrainian supply efforts.

Five railroad stations in central and western Ukraine were hit, and one worker was killed, said Oleksandr Kamyshin, head of Ukraine's state railway. Missiles struck Lviv, the western city near the Polish border jammed by Ukrainians fleeing their home.

Ukrainian authorities said at least five people were killed by Russian strikes in the central Vynnytsia region.

Russia also destroyed an oil refinery and fuel depots in Kremenchuk, in central Ukraine, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said. In all, Russian warplanes destroyed 56 Ukrainian targets, he said.

The strikes on fuel depots are meant to deplete vital Ukrainian war resources. Strikes against rail targets, both disrupt supply lines and intimidate people trying to use the railways to flee the fighting, said Philip Breedlove, a retired U.S. general who was NATO's top commander from 2013- 2016.

An estimated 2,000 Ukrainian troops holed up in a steel plant in the strategic southern port city of Mariupol are tying down Russian forces, apparently preventing them from joining the offensive elsewhere in the Donbas. Over the weekend, Russian forces launched new airstrikes on the Azovstal plant to try to dislodge the holdouts.

Some 1,000 civilians were also said to be taking shelter at the steelworks.

The city council and mayor of Mariupol said a new mass grave was identified about 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of the city. Mayor Vadym Boychenko said authorities were trying to estimate the number of victims. It was at least the third new mass grave discovered in Russian-controlled areas near Mariupol in the last week.

Mariupol has been gutted by bombardment and fierce street fighting over the past two months. Russia's capture of the city would deprive Ukraine of a vital port and give Moscow a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said Ukraine was maintaining its resistance to "make the occupiers' stay in our land even more intolerable," while Russia drains its resources.

Britain said it believes 15,000 Russian troops have been killed in Ukraine since Russia's invasion began. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said 25% of the Russian combat units sent to Ukraine "have been rendered not combat effective."



	Ukrainian officials have said about 2,500 to 3,000 Ukrainian troops had been killed as of mid-April.
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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Gold Ulrick hackers still in action</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/04/gold-ulrick-hackers-still-in-action.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/04/gold-ulrick-hackers-still-in-action.html</a>
GIST	<p>The infamous ransomware group known as Conti has <a href="#">continued</a> its onslaught against entities despite suffering a massive data leak of its own earlier this year, according to new research.</p> <p>Conti, attributed to a Russia-based threat actor known as Gold Ulrick, is one of the most prevalent malware strains in the ransomware landscape, accounting for <a href="#">19% of all attacks</a> during the three-month-period between October and December 2021.</p> <p>One of the most prolific ransomware groups of the last year along the likes of LockBit 2.0, PYSA, and Hive, Conti has locked the networks of hospitals, businesses, and government agencies, while receiving a ransom payment in exchange for sharing the decryption key as part of its name-and-shame scheme.</p> <p>But after the cybercriminal cartel came out in support of Russia over its invasion of Ukraine in February, an anonymous Ukrainian security researcher under the Twitter handle <a href="#">ContiLeaks</a> began leaking the source code as well as private conversations between its members, offering an unprecedented insight into the group's workings.</p> <p>"The chats reveal a mature cybercrime ecosystem across multiple threat groups with frequent collaboration and support," Secureworks <a href="#">said</a> in a report published in March. The groups include Gold Blackburn (TrickBot and <a href="#">Diavol</a>), Gold Crestwood (<a href="#">Emotet</a>), Gold Mystic (LockBit), and Gold Swathmore (<a href="#">IcedID</a>).</p> <p>Indeed, Intel 471's <a href="#">technical monitoring</a> of Emotet campaigns between December 25, 2021, and March 25, 2022, identified that over a dozen Conti ransomware targets were, in fact, victims of Emotet malspam attacks, highlighting how the <a href="#">two operations are intertwined</a>.</p> <p>That said, the leaks don't seem to have put a dampener on the syndicate's activities, with the number of Conti victims posted in March surged to the second-highest monthly total since January 2021, according to the cybersecurity firm.</p> <p>What's more, the group is said to have added 11 victims in the first four days of April, even as the operators continue to "evolve its ransomware, intrusion methods, and approaches" in response to the public disclosure of their arsenal.</p> <p>The findings have also been corroborated by <a href="#">NCC Group</a> late last month, which said that "Conti operators continue their business as usual by proceeding to compromise networks, exfiltrating data and finally deploying their ransomware."</p> <p><b>A web of connections between Conti and Karakurt</b></p> <p>The development comes as financial and <a href="#">tactical overlaps</a> have been uncovered between Conti and the <a href="#">Karakurt</a> data extortion group based on information published during the ContiLeaks saga, weeks after TrickBot's operators had been <a href="#">subsumed</a> into the ransomware cartel.</p> <p>An analysis of blockchain transactions associated with cryptocurrency addresses belonging to Karakurt has shown "Karakurt wallets sending substantial sums of cryptocurrency to Conti wallets," according to a <a href="#">joint investigation</a> by researchers from Arctic Wolf and Chainalysis.</p>

	<p>The shared wallet hosting is also said to involve the now-defunct TrickBot gang's Diavol ransomware, with a "Diavol extortion address hosted by a wallet containing addresses used in Conti ransomware attacks," indicating that Diavol is being deployed by the same set of actors behind Conti and Karakurt.</p> <p>Further forensic examination of an unnamed client that was hit with a subsequent wave of extortion attacks following a Conti ransomware infection has revealed that the second group used the same Cobalt Strike backdoor left behind by Conti, implying a strong association between seemingly disparate cybercrime actors.</p> <p>"Whether Karakurt is an elaborate side hustle by Conti and Diavol operatives or whether this is an enterprise sanctioned by the overall organization remains to be seen," Arctic Wolf said.</p> <p>"This connection perhaps explains why Karakurt is surviving and thriving despite some of its exfiltration-only competitors dying out," the researchers said, adding, "Or, alternatively, perhaps this was the trial run of a strategic diversification authorized by the main group."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Phishing goes KISS</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2022/04/25/phishing-goes-kiss-dont-let-plain-and-simple-messages-catch-you-out/">https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2022/04/25/phishing-goes-kiss-dont-let-plain-and-simple-messages-catch-you-out/</a>
GIST	<p>We're sure you've heard of the KISS principle: <i>Keep It Simple and Straightforward</i>.</p> <p>In cybersecurity, KISS cuts two ways.</p> <p>KISS <i>improves</i> security when your IT team avoids jargon and makes complex-but-important tasks easier to understand, but it <i>reduces</i> security when crooks steer clear of mistakes that would otherwise give their game away.</p> <p>For example, most of the phishing scams we receive are easy to spot because they contain at least one, and often several, very obvious mistakes.</p> <p>Incorrect logos, incomprehensible grammar, outright ignorance about our online identity, weird spelling errors, absurd punctuation!!!!, or bizarre scenarios (no, your surveillance spyware definitely did <i>not</i> capture live video through the black electrical tape we stuck over our webcam)... ...all these lead us instantly and unerringly to the [Delete] button.</p> <p>If you don't know our name, don't know our bank, don't know which languages we speak, don't know our operating system, don't know how to spell "respond immediately", heck, if you don't realise that <a href="#">Riyadh is not a city in Austria</a>, you're not going to get us to click.</p> <p>That's not so much because you'd stand out as a scammer, but simply that your email would advertise itself as "clearly does not belong here", or as "obviously sent to the wrong person", and we'd ignore it even if you were a legitimate business. (After that, we'd probably blocklist all your emails anyway, given your attitude to accuracy, but that's an issue for another day.)</p> <p>Indeed, as we've often urged on Naked Security, if spammers, scammers, phishers or other cybercriminals do make the sort of blunder that gives the game away, make sure you spot their mistakes, and make them pay for their blunder by deleting their message at once.</p> <p>KISS, plain and simple Sometimes, however, we receive phishing tricks that we grudgingly have to admit are better than average.</p> <p>Although we'd hope you'd spot them easily, they might nevertheless have a good chance of attracting your attention because they're believable enough, like this one from earlier today:</p>

At 10:49 am [2] new emails were returned to the sender.

Click below to get a failed message.

[https://sophos.com/message/failed\\_report/?tips@sophos.com](https://sophos.com/message/failed_report/?tips@sophos.com)

Thank you for using sophos.com

sophos.com Domain Manager

OK, so the English grammar and usage isn't quite right, and our IT team would know who they are, so they wouldn't sign off as company.name Domain Manager...

...but if we were a smaller company, and we'd outsourced our IT and email services, this sort of message might not so obviously be out of place.

Also, these crooks have used the simple and effective trick of creating a clickable link in which *the text of the link itself looks like a URL*, as though it was your email software than automatically converted a plain-text-only URL unto a clickable item.

Of course, the email isn't plain text; it's HTML, so that the offending link is actually encoded like this...

```
<a href="somewheredodgy">https://sophos.com/nothereatall</a>
```

...in the same way, but much more convincingly, than an email link such as...

Click [here](somewheredodgy) to see the message.

The link doesn't take you to a real site, of course; it's diverted to a server that was either set up for this specific scam, or hacked by the crooks to act as a temporary portal for collecting their data...

Fortunately, at this point the scam adheres to the KISS principle a bit too fiercely, relying on a web form that's so stripped down as to be unusual, but it still doesn't contain any obvious blunders other than the unexpected server name in the address bar.

Amusingly, because the hosting company that the criminals have used is based in Japan, turning JavaScript off results in an error message that we're guessing the crooks didn't care about (or perhaps were unable to change), giving you a JavaScript warning in Japanese...

Ironically, the web form works just fine without JavaScript, so if you were to fill in the form and click [Login], the crooks would harvest your username and password anyway.

As we often see, the scam page neatly avoids having to simulate a believable login by simply presenting you with an error message, until you either give up, contact your IT team, or both...

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Attacks on financial firms more damaging</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/cyberattacks-on-financial-firms-are-more-damaging-target-sensitive-data">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/cyberattacks-on-financial-firms-are-more-damaging-target-sensitive-data</a>
GIST	<p>Just as the tools to limit financial fraud have evolved, so have the threats aimed at U.S. financial firms, in terms of more advanced and subtle intrusions, and where they strike, according to a recent study.</p> <p>Two-thirds (66%) of financial service institutions experienced attacks targeting their “market strategies ... [in a way that] aligns with economic espionage and can be used to digitize insider trading and front-run the market,” according to a release on VMware’s fifth annual <a href="#">Modern Bank Heists report</a>, released last week.</p> <p>Once cyber-thieves get access to a financial network, the report found, they are <a href="#">not simply aiming</a> to make fraudulent wire transfers or access capital. Instead, <a href="#">savvy cybercrime syndicates</a> are collecting</p>

nonpublic market information, including earnings estimates, public offerings and “significant transactions” which underscore FSI’s market strategies.

Moreover, cyber-robbers have become much more sneaky in their attacks, altering tell-tale aspects of data-access to their own advantage. The report was the result of an online survey of 130 financial industry CISOs worldwide — more than 2 out of 5 in North America (41%) — conducted in February 2022 aimed at “provid[ing] insight into the changing behavior of cybercriminal cartels and the defensive shift of the financial sector.”

Two-thirds of respondents had seen time stamps manipulated — a so-called Chronos attack, named for the Greek god of time — with 44% of such attacks targeting financial firms’ market positions, according to the report findings.

“From a kill-chain perspective, the surge in attacks against APIs, the manipulation of time stamps, and the surge in destructive attacks as a function of counter-incident response were all surprising and are certainly concerning,” said Tom Kellermann, head of cybersecurity strategy at VMware and author of the Modern Bank Heists report.

Similarly, 3 out of 5 financial service firm CISOs (60%) said their institutions experience a noticeable increase in “island hopping,” where the attackers launch a campaign aimed at a bank or credit union’s more vulnerable third-party providers in order to access the FSI’s network. Financial CISOs said this represented a 58% increase in island hopping in the past year, ushering in “a new era of conspiracy, where hijacking the digital transformation of a financial institution via island hopping to attack its constituents has become the ultimate attack outcome,” according to the VMware release.

“The Secret Service, in its investigative capacity to protect the nation’s financial payment systems and financial infrastructure, has seen an evolution and increase in complex cyber-enabled fraud,” Jeremy Sheridan, former assistant director for the U.S. Secret Service, said in a prepared release.

Sheridan added that there are “a variety of reasons for the opportunities, motives, methods, and means related to criminal activity. At the forefront is the swelling profitability of these crimes which, of course, motivates criminal actors.”

And, with financial gain remaining a top motivation, roughly three-quarters of financial CISOs (74%) admitted that they had had at least one ransomware attack in the past 12 months, with 63% of those having paid the demanded ransom. Going forward, the lion’s share of respondents claimed that the situation with Russia presented a huge potential for politically and financially motivated attacks.

“The hijacking of banks’ infrastructure to launch attacks and the targeting of non-public market information are two notable trends that demonstrate the evolution of attacks on the financial sector in recent years,” said Kellermann.

Meanwhile, concerns over cryptocurrency security are also running high — 83% of financial CISOs surveyed claimed they are worried about how these crypto-exchanges might be targeted for attack in order to cash in.

Sheridan said in a release that the “proliferation of digital money payment systems has created a global, instantaneous and pseudo-anonymous means to facilitate their actions. All of these factors have facilitated the maturation of a cybercriminal ecosystem that has not been sufficiently suppressed.”

In response, the vast majority of financial institutions expect they will increase their budget by as much as 30% this year, with significant investment in extended detection and response (XDR), workload security and mobile security, the report found.

“Security has become top-of-mind for business leaders amid rising geopolitical tension, an increase in destructive attacks utilizing wipers and Remote Access Tools (RATs), and a record-breaking year of

	zero day exploits,” Kellermann said in an email response. “Financial institutions now understand that today’s attackers are moving from heist to hijack, from dwell to destruction, and leaving their mark on an extremely vulnerable sector. Collaboration between the cybersecurity community, government entities and the financial sector is paramount to combat these emerging, increasing threats.”
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 WSO2 products affected by critical flaw</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/organizations-warned-attacks-exploiting-wso2-vulnerability">https://www.securityweek.com/organizations-warned-attacks-exploiting-wso2-vulnerability</a>
GIST	<p>Products made by enterprise software development solutions provider WSO2 are affected by a critical vulnerability that has been exploited in the wild.</p> <p>According to WSO2’s website, its products are used by many major companies worldwide, including Fortune 500 firms, which could all be at risk.</p> <p>In addition, the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) on Monday added the flaw to its <a href="#">Known Exploited Vulnerabilities Catalog</a> and instructed federal agencies to install the available patches until May 16.</p> <p>The security hole is tracked as <a href="#">CVE-2022-29464</a> and it impacts WSO2’s API Manager, Identity Server, Enterprise Integrator, and Open Banking products. In its advisory for CVE-2022-29464, the vendor said temporary mitigations were made available in January 2022 and fixes were delivered in February.</p> <p>The vulnerability, discovered by Orange Tsai from DEVCORE, who over the past years has discovered many critical bugs that <a href="#">ended up being exploited in attacks</a>, has been described as an arbitrary file upload issue that can lead to remote code execution.</p> <p>“Due to improper validation of user input, a malicious actor could upload an arbitrary file to a user controlled location of the server. By leveraging the arbitrary file upload vulnerability, it is further possible to gain remote code execution on the server,” WSO2 said in its advisory.</p> <p>Technical details and proof-of-concept (PoC) exploits are available for the vulnerability and Rapid7 on Friday reported seeing <a href="#">opportunistic exploitation in the wild</a>.</p> <p>“Attackers appear to be staying close to the original proof-of-concept exploit and are dropping web shells and coin miners on exploited targets,” Rapid7 said, noting that exploitation is “quite easy.” Threat intelligence company Bad Packets has also reported seeing exploitation attempts.</p> <p>In addition to the WSO2 bug, CISA added six other flaws to its Known Exploited Vulnerabilities Catalog, which is often referred to as a “Must-Patch” list, due to the fact that government agencies are required — and private organizations are advised — to immediately address these vulnerabilities.</p> <p>The most recent issues added to the list are two Windows bugs (CVE-2022-26904 and CVE-2022-21919) and the Linux kernel flaw named Dirty Pipe.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Kansas hospital discloses data breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/kansas-hospital-data-breach/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/kansas-hospital-data-breach/</a>
GIST	<p>Email accounts at a Kansas hospital were compromised for nearly a year in a prolonged data breach affecting more than 52,000 individuals.</p> <p>Emporia-based <a href="#">Newman Regional Health</a> was breached by an unauthorized threat actor last year. In a data security <a href="#">notice</a> on its website, the healthcare provider disclosed that the actor was able to access a limited number of email accounts between January 26 2021 and November 23 2021.</p>

An investigation into the security incident, conducted "with the help of third-party experts," found that the compromised email accounts contained a treasure trove of personal data, including names, medical record numbers, birth dates, email addresses, phone numbers, addresses, treatment information and employee information.

"A limited group of individuals may have Social Security number or financial information affected," stated the healthcare provider.

Newman Regional Health said that the investigators reached their conclusions on March 14 2022, but did not state when suspicious activity had first been detected or when the investigation into the incident was launched.

The hospital made a vague statement on its website describing what action it had taken to prevent a similar attack from occurring in the future.

"The security of the data we maintain is of the highest priority to us and we are using enhanced security tools to protect it. Newman Regional Health has taken steps to help prevent similar incidents in the future," stated the healthcare provider.

Newman Regional Health has notified law enforcement of the data breach and is contacting by letter individuals whom the attack may have impacted. The healthcare provider said that while "there has been no evidence of fraudulent activity as a result of this incident," recipients of the letter should review the information provided regarding identity protection.

The [letter](#) states: "This incident was limited to certain email accounts and did not impact the privacy or security of Newman Regional Health's medical record or other information systems.

"While we do not have evidence that your information was used for fraudulent purposes, we are unable to conclusively rule out the possibility that your personal information was accessed and acquired as a result of this incident."

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HEADLINE	04/25 Crooks spoofing credit unions
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hackread.com/crooks-spoofing-credit-unions-steal-login-credentials/">https://www.hackread.com/crooks-spoofing-credit-unions-steal-login-credentials/</a>
GIST	<p>Email security provider Avanan revealed in a Thursday report that a new phishing campaign exploits local <a href="#">credit unions</a> to steal money and data. According to Avanan's research, phishing emails are masqueraded as legit messages from high-profile companies/businesses. They are sent to lure the recipient into sharing login credentials and sensitive data of the spoofed company.</p> <p><b>A dramatic rise in Credit Union Spoofing Phishing Campaigns</b></p> <p>Check Point firm Avanan claims that since February 2022, there has been a dramatic increase in phishing campaigns impersonating credit unions. The same was observed by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), which even <a href="#">advised</a> credit unions to stay cautious about emerging new threats amid the ever-changing geopolitical situation.</p> <p>Referring to CISA's advisory in January regarding Russian state-sponsored cyber threats to critical US infrastructure, NCUA noted that the risk of cyberattacks on US institutions has two-fold.</p> <p><b>Hackers Exploiting Undeveloped Email Security</b></p> <p>Although all financial and banking institutions are vulnerable to spoofed phishing emails but local credit unions are particularly vulnerable to such attacks due to insufficient security measures, researchers claim.</p> <p>Reportedly, 92% of the credit unions mainly lack proper security, while 66% lack adequate email security, which makes them at risk of phishing campaigns. Furthermore, credit unions generally rank</p>



higher than larger banks, so their members are far more likely to trust messages/notifications from them. This has led to an uptick in local credit unions [spoofing](#) phishing campaigns.

### Attack Tactics

Threat actors frequently use tactics like document alerts, wire transfer codes, and incoming payment notifications. The goal, however, is the same, which is to compel the recipient to enter account credentials and perform banking activities.

According to Avanan's [blog post](#), attackers use several different ways to obtain account details. In one of the phishing emails, the recipient was invited to click on a link for viewing their account statements and documents online.

Another email contained a link related to an important notice, while a third one interestingly requested money to stop wire transfer. The fourth one offered an ACH debit. In all the cases, the link provided in the email redirected the victim to a fake sign-in page supposedly belonging to the credit union. The user enters credentials on that page, which are sent to the attackers, and they use them to compromise the account and steal funds.

It is worth noting that credit union attacks like these could have substantial financial repercussions as the risk goes as high as \$1.2 million for larger credit unions.

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HEADLINE	04/25 Quantum ransomware in speedy attacks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/quantum-ransomware-seen-deployed-in-rapid-network-attacks/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/quantum-ransomware-seen-deployed-in-rapid-network-attacks/</a>
GIST	<p>The Quantum ransomware, a strain first discovered in August 2021, were seen carrying out speedy attacks that escalate quickly, leaving defenders little time to react.</p> <p>The threat actors are using the IcedID malware as one of their initial access vectors, which deploys Cobalt Strike for remote access and leads to data theft and encryption using Quantum Locker.</p> <p>The technical details of a Quantum ransomware attack were analyzed by security researchers at <a href="#">The DFIR Report</a>, who says the attack lasted only 3 hours and 44 minutes from initial infection to the completion of encrypting devices.</p> <p><b>Using IcedID as initial access</b></p> <p>The attack seen by The DFIR Report used the IcedID malware as the initial access to the target's machine, which they believe arrived via a phishing email containing an ISO file attachment.</p> <p>IcedID is a modular banking trojan used for the past five years, primarily for second-stage payload deployment, loaders, and ransomware.</p> <p>The combination of IcedID and ISO archives has been <a href="#">used in other attacks recently</a>, as these files are excellent for passing through email security controls.</p> <p>Two hours after the initial infection, the threat actors inject Cobalt Strike into a C:\Windows\SysWOW64\cmd.exe process to evade detection.</p> <p>At this phase, the intruders stole Windows domain credentials by dumping the memory of LSASS, which allowed them to spread laterally through the network.</p> <p>"For the next hour, the threat actor proceeded to make RDP connections to other servers in the environment," details DFIR in <a href="#">the report</a>.</p>

"Once the threat actor had a handle on the layout of the domain, they prepared to deploy the ransomware by copying the ransomware (named ttse.exe) to each host through the C\$ share folder."

Eventually, the threat actors used WMI and PsExec to deploy the Quantum ransomware payload and encrypt devices.

This attack only took four hours, which is quite fast, and as these attacks commonly occur late at night or over the weekend, it does not provide a large window for network and security admins to detect and respond to the attack.

For more details about the TTPs used by Quantum Locker, The DFIR Report has provided an extensive list of indicators of compromise as well as C2 addresses that IcedID and Cobalt Strike connected to for communication.

### Who is Quantum Locker?

The Quantum Locker ransomware is a rebrand of the [MountLocker ransomware operation](#), which launched in September 2020.

Since then, the ransomware gang has [rebranded its operation to various names](#), including AstroLocker, XingLocker, and now in its current phase, Quantum Locker.

The rebrand to Quantum occurred in August 2021, when the ransomware encryptor began appending the **.quantum** file extension to encrypted file names and dropping ransom notes named **README\_TO\_DECRYPT.html**.

These notes include a link to a Tor ransom negotiation site and a unique ID associated with the victim. The ransom notes also state that data was stolen during the attack, which the attackers threaten to publish if a ransom is not paid.

While The DFIR Report states that they saw no data exfiltration activity in the attack they analyzed, BleepingComputer has confirmed in the past that they do steal data during attacks and leak it in double-extortion schemes.

The ransom demands for this gang vary depending on the victim, with some attacks demanding \$150,000 to receive a decryptor, while others seen by BleepingComputer are multi-million dollar demands...

Thankfully, Quantum Locker is not a very active operation like its previous incarnations, with only a handful of attacks each month.

However, while they may not be as active as other ransomware operations, such as Conti, LockBit, and AVOS, they are still a significant risk and it is important for network defenders to be aware of the TTPs related to their attacks.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 French hospital group offline; data stolen</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/french-hospital-group-disconnects-internet-after-hackers-steal-data/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/french-hospital-group-disconnects-internet-after-hackers-steal-data/</a>
GIST	<p>The GHT Coeur Grand Est. Hospitals and Health Care group has disconnected all incoming and outgoing Internet connections after discovering they suffered a cyberattack that resulted in the theft of sensitive administrative and patient data.</p> <p>GHT is a hospital network located in Northeast France consisting of nine locations, 6,000 employees, and approximately 3,370 beds.</p>

The cyberattack occurred on April 19th and affected the CHs of Vitry-le-François and Saint-Dizier, causing GHT to disconnect Internet connections to the hospitals to prevent the attack's spread and further data theft.

"The GHT Cœur Grand Est has cut all incoming and outgoing internet connections from its establishments in order to protect and secure information systems and data," reads a translated [statement](#) from GHT.

"This computer containment will continue until the risk of a new attack exploiting the flaw created is completely circumscribed. To this end, some online services are temporarily unavailable (making appointments, etc.)."

The hospital network says that the attackers also managed to copy administrative computer data stored in the establishment's systems and warn that other threat actors may publish and use the data.

Patient care continues as usual, while the software used in the hospitals has not been affected by this incident, so all IT systems remain operational.

However, online services remain impacted while investigating the flaw that allowed the threat actors access to their network.

Furthermore, due to the data breach that has taken place, the risk of social engineering attacks and scams against patients or hospital employees has increased dramatically.

To mitigate this risk, [GHT's announcement](#) urges everyone to stay vigilant against emails, SMS, and phone calls and report any suspicious requests to law enforcement authorities.

### **Industrial Spy victim**

While the hospital center's announcement doesn't contain attribution clues, Bleeping Computer has seen a new entry on Industrial Spy's website, the [new market for stolen data](#).

Industrial Spy is a dark web platform that promotes itself as a marketplace for buying corporate data that contain sensitive information like schematics, financial reports, trade secrets, and client databases.

In this case, however, Industrial Spy isn't offering anything that could draw the attention of a competitor. Instead, the data set exposes patient data among other administrative documents.

The marketplace says they allegedly extorted the hospital network for \$1,300,000, but after the timer ran out, the threat actors put the 28.7 GB of stolen data up for purchase on the site.

The threat actors claim the stolen personal data of patients includes social security numbers, passport scans, banking info, emails, and phone numbers.

[Valéry Rieß-Marchive](#), the editor-in-chief of the French infosec news portal LeMagIT, told Bleeping Computer that while GHT is a large group of public medical facilities, the cyberattack appears to only impact the hospital in Vitry-Le-François.

The reporter told us that most hospitals within the GHT network operate their own IT infrastructure, although some overlaps become apparent from DNS records, like the common infrastructure between Vitry-Le-François and the Hospital of Saint-Dizier.

Despite that, the two don't appear to be on the same Microsoft 365 tenant, so the most crucial infrastructure parts are still separate.

### **Other French hospital breaches**

	<p>At the end of March, the Hospital de Castelluccio in Corsica was hit by hackers who also managed to exfiltrate sensitive patient data and other documents during the attack.</p> <p>The incident was disclosed to the public immediately and had <a href="#">negative repercussions</a> on the operation of radiotherapy in the hospital's oncology unit.</p> <p>This weekend, Vice Society, another stolen data marketplace, published the exfiltrated documents allegedly derived from the attack on the Castelluccio hospital, making them available for purchase.</p> <p>These include employee correspondence, HR information, patient records, identities, social security coverage details, and more.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Emotet malware infects users again</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/emotet-malware-infects-users-again-after-fixing-broken-installer/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/emotet-malware-infects-users-again-after-fixing-broken-installer/</a>
GIST	<p>The Emotet malware phishing campaign is up and running again after the threat actors fixed a bug preventing people from becoming infected when they opened malicious email attachments.</p> <p>Emotet is a malware infection distributed through spam campaigns with malicious attachments. If a user opens the attachment, malicious macros or scripts will download the Emotet DLL and load it into memory.</p> <p>Once loaded, the malware will search for and steal emails to use in future spam campaigns and drop additional payloads such as <a href="#">Cobalt Strike</a> or other malware that commonly leads to ransomware attacks.</p> <p><b>Buggy attachments broke the Emotet campaign</b></p> <p>Last Friday, the Emotet malware distributors launched a new email campaign that included password-protected ZIP file attachments containing Windows LNK (shortcut) files pretending to be Word documents.</p> <p>When a user double-clicked on the shortcut, it would execute a command that searches the shortcut file for a particular string that contains Visual Basic Script code, appends the found code to a new VBS file, and executes that VBS file...</p> <p>However, this command contained a bug as it used a static shortcut name of 'Password2.doc.lnk,' even though the actual name of the attached shortcut file is different, like 'INVOICE 2022-04-22_1033, USA.doc'.</p> <p>This caused the command to fail, as the Password2.doc.lnk file did not exist, and thus the VBS file was not created, as explained by the Emotet research group Cryptolaemus.</p> <p>Cryptolaemus researcher <a href="#">Joseph Roosen</a> told BleepingComputer that Emotet shut down the new email campaign at approximately 00:00 UTC on Friday after discovering that the bug was preventing users from becoming infected.</p> <p>Unfortunately, Emotet fixed the bug today and, once again, started spamming users with malicious emails containing password-protected zip files and shortcut attachments.</p> <p>These shortcuts now reference the correct filenames when the command is executed, allowing the VBS files to be created correctly and the Emotet malware to be downloaded and installed on victims' devices.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 NKorea APT37 deploying novel malware</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/dprk-state-actors-deploying-novel-malware-to-spy-on-journalists">https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/dprk-state-actors-deploying-novel-malware-to-spy-on-journalists</a>
GIST	<p>New analysis has attributed a spear-phishing campaign targeting journalists covering North Korea to APT37/Ricochet Chollimia, a state-backed group linked to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Notably, researchers said the group is deploying a novel malware strain called Goldbackdoor, a variation of Bluelight malware previously attributed to <a href="#">APT37</a>.</p> <p>According to a report from researchers at Stairwell, multiple phishing emails were sent to NK News on Mar. 18 that appeared to be from the personal email address of the previously compromised former head of the South Korean National Intelligence Service, and contained <a href="#">Goldbackdoor malware</a>. NK News handed over the information to Stairwell for further investigation, the cybersecurity firm said.</p> <p>"Due to the sensitive nature of journalists' work, they are often targets of surveillance and malware, intent on stealing information, ferreting out sources or even destroying evidence and scaring the reporters into not publishing stories," Erich Kron, security awareness advocate at KnowBe4, said in response to the news. "In regimes like North Korea, where news is tightly controlled by the state, articles or information that paints the leadership or government in a negative light is treated as a serious threat to national security."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Ukraine invasion driving DDoS attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/ukraine-invasion-driving-ddos-attacks-to-all-time-highs">https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/ukraine-invasion-driving-ddos-attacks-to-all-time-highs</a>
GIST	<p>The first quarter of 2022 saw a 46% increase in distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks over Q4 2021, which a new report attributes to a community of "hacktivists" intent on disrupting Russian state interests in retaliation for the Ukraine invasion.</p> <p>The report, by security vendor Kaspersky, notes that the volume of <a href="#">DDoS attacks</a> was already historically high, but the first months of 2022 saw more targeted and innovative activity than previously seen. The DDoS attacks also persisted for much longer than previously recorded, with the average DDoS session lasting 80 times longer than during the last months of 2021.</p> <p>The report points to one instance from the past quarter where attackers set up a site similar to a popular puzzle game called "2048" to make launching attacks on Russian sites more like a game to recruit others to launch additional attacks.</p> <p>"In Q1 2022 we witnessed an all-time high number of DDoS attacks," said Alexander Gutnikov, security expert at Kaspersky, in a statement. "The upward trend was largely affected by the geopolitical situation. What is quite unusual is the long duration of the DDoS attacks, which are usually executed for immediate profit. Some of the attacks we observed lasted for days and even weeks, suggesting that they might have been conducted by ideologically motivated cyberactivists."</p> <p>Gutnikov pointed out that <a href="#">the report found</a> most organizations were unprepared to defend against DDoS attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Phishing soars: retail, wholesale targeted</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2022/04/25/global-phishing-trends/?web_view=true">https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2022/04/25/global-phishing-trends/?web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Zscaler released the findings of a report that reviews 12 months of global phishing data from its security cloud to identify key <a href="#">trends</a>, industries and geographies at risk, and emerging tactics.</p> <p>According to the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), phishing attempts are the most frequently-reported cyberattack. The research team analyzed data from more than 200 billion daily transactions, and 150 million daily blocked attacks in order to identify emerging threats and track malicious actors from across the globe.</p>

This year's report showed dramatic 29% growth in overall phishing attacks compared to previous years, with retail and wholesale companies bearing the brunt of the increase. The report also showed an emerging reliance on phishing-as-a-service methods, as well as new attack vectors, such as SMS phishing, becoming one of the more prevalent methods of intrusion.

"Phishing attacks are impacting businesses and consumers with alarming frequency, complexity, and scope – with the rise in phishing-as-a-service making it easier than ever for non-sophisticated actors to launch successful attacks. Our annual report highlights how cybercriminals continue to escalate their usage of phishing as a starting point to breach organizations to deliver ransomware or steal sensitive data," said [Deepen Desai](#), CISO and VP of Security Research and Operations at [Zscaler](#).

"To defend against advanced phishing attacks, organizations must leverage a multi-pronged defensive strategy anchored on a cloud native zero trust platform that unifies full SSL inspection with AI/ML-powered detection to stop the most sophisticated phishing attempts and [phishing kits](#), lateral movement prevention and integrated deception to limit the blast radius of a compromised user, proactive controls to block high risk destinations such as newly registered domains that are often abused by threat actors, and in-line DLP to safeguard against data theft."

Phishing has always been one of the most pervasive cyberthreats, with various methods used to steal private information. One of the reasons this type of attack grows in prevalence every year is its low barrier to entry. Cybercriminals use current events, such as the [COVID-19](#) pandemic or cryptocurrency, to convince unwitting victims to hand over confidential data, such as passwords, credit card information, and login credentials.

The 2022 ThreatLabz Phishing Report found that phishing attacks lure victims by posing as [top brands](#) or promoting topical events. The top phishing themes in 2021 included categories such as productivity tools, illegal streaming sites, shopping sites, social media platforms, financial institutions, and logistical services.

#### **Phishing trends: A global problem**

In 2021, the U.S. was the most-targeted country globally, accounting for over 60% of all phishing attacks blocked. The next most frequently attacked countries include Singapore, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Not all countries experienced the same attention from phishing attacks. For example, the Netherlands experienced a decrease of 38 %, which may have resulted from recently-passed legislation that increased the penalties for online fraud.

Phishing attacks were also not evenly distributed across different industries. Retail and wholesale businesses experienced an increase of over 400% in phishing attempts – the most out of all tracked industries. These businesses were followed by financial and government sectors, with organizations in these industries seeing over 100% increases in attacks on average. However, some industries experienced partial relief from phishing attacks last year. Healthcare saw a notable drop of 59 %, while the services industry saw a decline of 33 %.

#### **Phishing-as-a-Service: The growing threat**

While phishing has long been one of the most common tactics used in cyberattacks by sophisticated threat actors, it's becoming more accessible to non-technical cybercriminals due to a maturing underground marketplace for attack frameworks and services. By selling their pre-built phishing tools and services on the dark web, cybercriminals are making it easier to deploy phishing scams at scale, creating a greater chance for more phishing activity in 2022.

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HEADLINE	04/25 Ransomware attacks cost UK schools
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-attacks-cost/?web_view=true">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-attacks-cost/?web_view=true</a>



GIST	<p>The UK's education sector continues to be hit by spiraling ransomware attacks, which can cost affected organizations in excess of £2m per incident, according to a new <a href="#">Jisc</a> report.</p> <p>The non-profit provides the UK's higher and further education sector with IT services, including the superfast Janet network and incident response.</p> <p>Head of Janet policy and strategy, John Chapman, warned that ransomware and malware were now the top threats for the sector, with phishing and social engineering coming second.</p> <p>A cyber impact report published by Jisc in 2020 was updated this month to contain more anonymous case studies of organizations compromised by ransomware.</p> <p>"Since Jisc's first cyber impact report, the main development has been the sustained increase in ransomware attacks: 15 further education (FE) and higher education (HE) organisations were impacted by ransomware in 2020, a further 18 in 2021, and at least three so far in 2022," <a href="#">Chapman explained</a>.</p> <p>"More than 100 UK schools have also been affected."</p> <p>Part of the challenge for colleges and universities is that remote working has continued even as campuses reopen following COVID lockdowns.</p> <p>"Personal data and information are now increasingly held on devices outside campuses," said Chapman. "Protecting that information, wherever it exists, has extended existing security challenges and inadvertently led to some major security incidents."</p> <p>While some universities are responding by enhancing security, such as the deployment of multi-factor authentication, others are more at risk and could be exposing themselves to multimillion-pound breaches.</p> <p>"It appears many institutions are not systematically tracking and therefore do not fully understand all costs associated with a cybersecurity incident," said Chapman.</p> <p>"From the experience of Jisc's computer security and incident response team (CSIRT) – in helping HE and FE providers recover from ransomware incidents, we are aware of impact costs exceeding £2m. These huge numbers may seem unrealistic, but as this report shows, there are many ways an incident can affect an institution, not all of which are recorded."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Prynt Stealer malware sells for \$100/mo.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-powerful-prynt-stealer-malware-sells-for-just-100-per-month/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-powerful-prynt-stealer-malware-sells-for-just-100-per-month/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Threat analysts have spotted yet another addition to the growing space of info-stealer malware infections, named Prynt Stealer, which offers powerful capabilities and extra keylogger and clipper modules.</p> <p>Prynt Stealer targets a large selection of web browsers, messaging apps, and gaming apps and can also perform direct financial compromise.</p> <p>Its authors sell the tool in time-based subscriptions, such as 100\$/month, \$200/quarter, or \$700 for a year, but it is also sold under a lifetime license for \$900.</p> <p>Additionally, buyers may take advantage of the malware's builder to create a specialized, lean, and hard-to-detect spin of Prynt to be deployed in targeted operations.</p> <p><b>Extensive stealing capabilities</b></p>

Malware [analysts at Cyble](#) have analyzed Prynt to evaluate the new info-stealer and report that the tool was crafted with stealthiness as a priority, featuring binary obfuscation and Rijndael encrypted strings.

Moreover, all its C2 communications are encrypted with AES256, while the AppData folder (and subfolders) created for temporarily storing the stolen data before exfiltration are hidden.

At first, Prynt Stealer scans all drives in the host and steals documents, database files, source code files, and image files that have a size below 5,120 bytes (5 KB).

Next, the malware targets autofill data, credentials (account passwords), credit card info, search history, and cookies stored in Chrome-based, MS Edge, and Firefox-based web browsers.

At this stage, the malware uses ScanData () to check if any keywords relevant to banking, cryptocurrency, or porn sites are present in the browser data and steals them if they are.

Next, Prynt targets messaging apps like Discord, Pidgin, and Telegram and also snatches Discord tokens if present on the system.

Gaming app authorization files, save game files, and other valuable data from Ubisoft Uplay, Steam, and Minecraft are also stolen.

Then, the malware queries the registry to locate the data directories for cryptocurrency wallets, such as Zcash, Armory, Bytecoin, Jaxx, Ethereum, AtomicWallet, Guarda, and the Coinomi cryptocurrency wallets.

As these data directories contain the actual wallet configuration files and databases, the threat actors collect them to steal the cryptocurrency stored within them.

Finally, Prynt steals data from FileZilla, OpenVPN, NordVPN, and ProtonVPN, copying the associated account credentials on the corresponding subfolder in AppData.

Before exfiltration, Prynt Stealer performs a general system profiling action involving the enumeration of running processes, taking a screenshot of the summary, and bundling it with the network credentials and the Windows product key used in the host machine.

The eventual theft of the compressed data is done via a Telegram bot that employs a secure encrypted network connection to pass everything to the remote server.

### **Clipper and keylogger**

Apart from the above features, which are in line with what most info-stealers are capable of nowadays, Prynt also comes with a clipper and a keylogger.

A clipper is a tool that monitors copied data on the compromised machine's clipboard to identify cryptocurrency wallet addresses and replace them on-the-fly with one under the threat actor's control.

Whenever the victim attempts to pay with cryptocurrency to a specific address, the malware covertly switches the recipient's address, and the payment is diverted to the hackers.

The keylogger is another additional module that enables remote malware operators to perform bulk information stealing by recording all key presses.

Prynt is another addition to a plethora of available info-stealing malware tools that cybercriminals can choose from, many of which recently appeared in the wild.

	<p>While its keylogger, clipper, and extensive stealing capabilities combined with a stealthy operation make it a good candidate for broad deployment, its relatively high cost (compared to other recently emerged malware) and doubtful server infrastructure reliability might put a brake on its rise.</p> <p>Still, Prynt is a dangerous malware that can steal sensitive user information and lead to significant financial damages, account compromise, and data breach.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Costa Rica refuses to pay cyber ransom</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/costa-rica-refuses-to-pay-ransom/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/costa-rica-refuses-to-pay-ransom/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Costa Rica says it will not pay a ransom to a cyber-criminal gang that has infected its government's computer systems with ransomware.</p> <p>The disruption of multiple systems was first reported a week ago by the country's Finance Ministry. An attack on the ministry impacted several processes, including tax collection, the payment of public employees and the importation and exportation of goods through Costa Rica's customs agency.</p> <p>Further attacks were waged against Costa Rica's Labor Ministry, the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications (MICITT), the National Meteorological Institute (IMN), the Radiográfica Costarricense (RACSA) and a human resources portal belonging to the country's Social Security agency, Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social.</p> <p>Head of MICITT, Paola Vega Castillo, said that while the contents of his ministry's web page had been modified, no evidence had been found to suggest that any data belonging to the ministry had been extracted.</p> <p>Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, Castillo said that a "process of extracting email archives" had been detected in the attacks on RACSA and IMN.</p> <p>Russian-speaking ransomware group Conti claimed responsibility for the attacks, but neither the identity nor the geographical location of the perpetrators has been confirmed by the Costa Rican government.</p> <p>Conti claims to have gained access to about 800 servers belonging to the government and has reportedly demanded a ransom payment of \$10m. The gang claims to have stolen 1TB of data in the attack, including 900GB of databases from a tax administration portal and 100GB of internal documents containing personal information which belong to the Ministry of Finance.</p> <p>Costa Rica President Carlos Alvarado said: "The Costa Rican state will not pay anything to these cyber-criminals."</p> <p>Minister of the Presidency Geannina Dinarte Romero said that Israel, Spain, the United States, Microsoft and GBM had offered to help Costa Rica regain control of its computer systems.</p> <p>Christian Rucavado, executive director of Costa Rica's Exporters Chamber, told US News that the attack on the customs agency had slowed trade.</p> <p>Rucavado said: "We have asked the government for various actions like expanding hours so they can attend to exports and imports."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Bored Ape Yacht Club Instagram hacked</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/88gpxq/bored-ape-yacht-club-instagram-hacked-nfts-worth-millions-stolen">https://www.vice.com/en/article/88gpxq/bored-ape-yacht-club-instagram-hacked-nfts-worth-millions-stolen</a>
GIST	<p>On Monday, the Bored Ape Yacht Club NFT project announced that its Instagram account had been hacked <a href="#">in a tweet</a>.</p>

“There is no mint going on today. It looks like BAYC Instagram was hacked. Do not mint anything, click links, or link your wallet to anything,” the group wrote.

On its official Discord channel, a moderator warned users: “THERE IS A FAKE LAND MINT WEBSITE BEING SHARED BY THE BAYC IG. DO NOT MINT ANYTHING.”

The hackers advertised a fake distribution of NFTs, known as an airdrop in the web3 world, which tricked users into clicking on a malicious link. Once people clicked on it, they gave control of their wallets to the hackers, [according to CoinDesk](#).

In a tweet, independent blockchain sleuth Zachxbt shared a link to [the hacker's Ethereum address](#), which is currently labeled as being a phishing address on Etherscan. Blockchain records show that the address received 134 NFTs within the space of a few hours on Monday morning. The stolen assets include numerous NFTs from Yuga Labs, the firm behind BAYC, including Bored Ape, Mutant Ape, and Kennel Club NFTs. The value of those NFTs before they were stolen was \$2.7 million.

It’s unclear at this point how the hackers compromised the Instagram account.

A spokesperson for Yuga Labs, the company that created Bored Ape Yacht Club, said in a statement that “the hacker posted a fraudulent link to a copycat of the Bored Ape Yacht Club website, where a safeTransferFrom attack asked users to connect their MetaMask to the scammer’s wallet in order to participate in a fake Airdrop. At 9:53am ET, we alerted our community, removed all links to Instagram from our platforms and attempted to recover the hacked Instagram account.”

“Two-factor authentication was enabled and the security practices surrounding the IG account were tight. Yuga Labs and Instagram are currently investigating how the hacker was able to gain access to the account. We’re still investigating. Rough estimated losses due to the scam are 4 Bored Apes, 6 Mutant Apes, and 3 BAKC, as well as assorted other NFTs estimated at a total value of ~\$3m. We are actively working to establish contact with affected users,” read the statement sent via email.

Earlier this month, [the official Discord channel of Bored Ape Yacht Club, along with several other NFTs Discords](#) were hacked as part of a phishing scam. The hack tricked users into clicking on a link to “mint” a fake NFT by sending ETH and in some cases an NFT to wrap into a token.

In the Discord channel, several people complained about being victims of today’s scam.

“They stole a bunch of s\*\*\*. I had a rare king mutant and a bunny ear mutant. stuff that would sell above floor. I just lost over 100 ether on this. F\*\*\*\*\* unacceptable. From official ig, the website looked real,” one user wrote. “I’m at the point where I have to sue yugo over this hack. Im not walking away from \$300k because their s\*\*\* was hacked.”

Another user wrote in solidarity for the people who lost their precious JPGs: “RIP to the apes that got tricked on IG today.”

Others blamed the victims.

“It’s like watching a bunch of people run into a burning building with free money spray painted on it,” wrote one user.

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HEADLINE	04/25 US spike in child sexual abuse URLs
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/child-abuse-hosting-us-increase/">https://www.wired.com/story/child-abuse-hosting-us-increase/</a>
GIST	<b>EVERY YEAR THE</b> number of photos and videos containing child sexual abuse found online increases—and 2021 was no exception. Investigators discovered record amounts of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) last year, new figures reveal.

Data from UK child safety nonprofit the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) shows 252,194 URLs containing child sexual abuse imagery in the last 12 months. That's up 64 percent from 2020. As well as record overall numbers, the charity found a significant uptick in the amount of CSAM hosted in the United States. Chris Hughes, the director of the IWF's hotline, says the organization responds to reports of CSAM online and also proactively [uses technology to hunt down abusive content](#). Most of the photos the IWF finds are on image-hosting websites, where people can upload content to share.

Since 2016, the Netherlands has hosted more abuse material than any other country the IWF has analyzed. (It is home to one of the [world's largest internet exchanges](#)). Last year, the Netherlands had 102,676 confirmed reports of CSAM, 41 percent of everything the IWF found. This is a drop from 2020's figures, but it coincided with a spike in US-linked reports.

The IWF traced 52,774 URLs containing CSAM to the US last year, which makes up 21 percent of URLs it recorded and puts the country in second place in the IWF's charts. In 2020, it found 8,257 URLs hosted in the US. Hughes says the shift happened as image-hosting websites changed their geographical hosts to avoid being taken offline.

"A number of these image hosts and forum sites have moved out of the Netherlands," Hughes says. "That handful of sites—and there's two in particular that I can think of that have moved to the US—are now driving up our statistics for US-based content." He refuses to name the sites as it would draw more attention to them.

Websites that host CSAM are constantly moving around to avoid detection, Hughes says. One site, he claims, has moved host 10 times this year alone. It has been hosted in France, Latvia, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russia, the UK, and the US. It can be easier for websites to "hide in plain sight" when moving to a country with lots of internet hosting, Hughes says.

"We have seen a steep decline in the material [in] the last year," says Asda Gerkens, the chief executive of Dutch child protection group EOKM. "This is not a good thing. A lot of the websites have moved to countries where there is no hotline or any other method to ask them to take down the material." In the Netherlands, Gerkens says, 95 percent of abuse material is removed within 24 hours of being discovered.

While the IWF's 2021 figures show a geographical shift, they're only one snapshot of what's being found online. The true scale of CSAM online is unclear. In part, record numbers are being found each year as [tech companies and child safety organizations are getting better at detecting it](#).

"There is a global increase in incidents," says John Shehan, a vice president at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), a US-based nonprofit child safety organization. By law, tech companies in the US—from Facebook and Google to GitHub and Giphy—are required to report any CSAM they find on their systems. Last year, more than 200 companies made 29 million reports of abuse material, according to [figures reported to NCMEC](#). "That was an increase of about 35 percent compared to the year prior," Shehan says. These reports contained 39 million images and 44 million videos, he adds.

NCMEC's [geographical breakdown](#) shows the US as one of the largest locations for reports—716,474 reports were made last year (up from [494,388 in 2020](#))—but it is dwarfed by other nations. More than 4.6 million reports of child abuse material were linked to India last year, while more than 2 million reports were linked to both Pakistan and the Philippines. Multiple other countries had more than a million reports.

The amount of child sexual abuse material being found online may continue to swell in the coming years—both the EU and UK plan to make it mandatory for companies to [proactively look for abusive content](#). Although the laws could prove tricky to implement. The plans could involve greater [scanning of people's communications](#) and are likely to provoke further [clashes over end-to-end encryption](#), which protects people's privacy and security. As Apple learned last year, trying to [balance the trade-offs isn't simple](#).

HEADLINE	04/25 Europe's new emergency rules for internet
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/europe-digital-services-act/">https://www.wired.com/story/europe-digital-services-act/</a>
GIST	<p>IN THE EARLY hours of Saturday morning, the European Union (EU) approved a law that would allow authorities to impose a state of emergency on social media sites, search engines, and online marketplaces.</p> <p>The “crisis mechanism” was among a long set of rules in the Digital Services Act, which aims to make the internet safer. Prompted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it will give authorities in the bloc significant influence over how major tech platforms with more than 45 million EU users, such as Facebook, TikTok, and Amazon, are run during pandemics and wars.</p> <p>“It was agreed that when a crisis occurs, such as a public security or health threat, the Commission may require very large platforms to limit any urgent threats on its platforms,” says Henna Virkkunen, a Finnish member of European Parliament (MEP) from the European People's Party, who took part in the negotiations.</p> <p>The landmark rules will also hand European authorities new powers to force tech platforms to be more transparent about how their algorithms work, to remove more content or products defined as “illegal,” and to restrict advertising based on a sensitive information, such as race, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. Dark patterns and advertising targeted at children will be banned. Fines for platforms that don’t comply can reach as high as 6 percent of global turnover.</p> <p>The European Commission, headed by president Ursula von der Leyen, will be in charge of enforcement, effectively ending a system in which Ireland—the country where most Big Tech platforms have their European headquarters—is home to the only regulator able to enforce the rules. Europe’s 27 member states will also have more influence over content moderation on platforms like Facebook and YouTube. “Any national authority will be able to request that illegal content be removed, regardless of where the platform is established in Europe,” said European official Thierry Breton before negotiations had concluded and just hours before the new rules were agreed upon in Brussels.</p> <p>Within the broad package of rules, the crisis mechanism was among the most controversial. “It looks like the war in Ukraine created a political opportunity for advocates of tighter restrictions to push their agenda,” said Daphne Keller, platform regulation director at Stanford’s Cyber Policy Center, on Thursday. “That’s pretty normal politics, if bad law.”</p> <p>Tech platforms played a significant role in shaping the public’s response to both the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell described Russian disinformation about Ukraine spreading on the European internet as a “direct threat” to European security. Amazon said in February 2020 that it had banned sales of more than a million products on its platform that promised to cure or protect people from the coronavirus.</p> <p>Until now, there has been no law in Europe enabling authorities to intervene in platforms’ policies when the bloc faces threats to public health or security. When EU lawmakers wanted to ban media outlets deemed to be spreading Russian propaganda in response to the invasion of Ukraine, such as Sputnik and RT, they leaned on the sanctions regime and platforms’ willingness to cooperate. “We cannot rely solely on platforms’ goodwill when facing crises, pandemics, or wars,” said Breton.</p> <p>“We have seen how important a role the platforms have [had] in Ukraine. So if there is some kind of crisis, we need to have some tools because we don't have any legislation for that,” says Virkkunen. “There could be some other kind of a crisis where we don't have sanctions.”</p> <p>However, critics of the crisis mechanism are concerned that it concentrates too much power in the hands of the European Commission. Facebook should not be making important decisions about the global information space alone, says Jan Penfrat, senior policy advisor at the Brussels-based digital rights group EDRI, “but at the same time, we don't want the European executive, which is a very political body under a</p>



lot of pressure from member states, especially in crisis situations, to be the sole institution to decide this either.”

Although European lawmakers have reached a political agreement on the digital services act, the regulation’s language and technical details have yet to be finalized, and there is still uncertainty about what powers the Commission will have over tech platforms in times of crisis.

The text agreed to in Friday’s negotiations suggests the Commission could recommend changes to Facebook or TikTok’s terms of service and to the way platforms moderate or rank content. It could also force platforms to put government-approved information at the top of search results, says Penfrat.

Facebook, Amazon, and TikTok declined to comment on the new rules. Google did not reply to a request to comment. “Our main issue with the crisis mechanism was from the onset that it would give extensive powers to the European Commission without appropriate checks and balances,” says Romain Digneaux, policy officer at Dot Europe, a lobbying group that counts Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Google, Apple, and Amazon among its members. Digneaux added that the measure’s late introduction made it very difficult to debate.

Wikipedia was also concerned that the crisis mechanism would force the platform to interfere with content decisions that are usually made by the website’s community, according to Jan Gerlach, public policy director at Wikimedia, Wikipedia’s nonprofit parent organization.

For others, the crisis mechanism feels too broad. “What the Commission can require the platforms to do is not set out specifically, so it can be very far-reaching,” says German MEP Patrick Breyer, from the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance. “The definition of an emergency is really wide,” he adds.

For the crisis mechanism to take effect, it first has to be triggered by a new board of representatives from each member state. It also includes a sunset clause, which means the Commission’s emergency powers over technology platforms automatically expire after three months.

“All measures under the crisis mechanism will be limited in time and accompanied by safeguards for fundamental rights,” says Johannes Bahrke, the European Commission’s coordinating spokesperson for digital economy research and innovation, adding that the Commission will only be able to extend the three-month period upon recommendation by the board, and any use of the crisis mechanism will be made public.

The Commission will not directly intervene in platforms’ policies, says Bahrke, although it can suggest solutions to certain problems, such as hiring more Ukrainian-speaking content moderators. It is unclear whether the platforms could be sanctioned if they rejected the Commission’s suggestions.

The Digital Services Act is part of twin legislation that aims to reinvent the relationship between European lawmakers and major platforms operating within the bloc, such as Facebook, Google-owned YouTube, and Amazon.

While [the Digital Markets Act](#)—which was agreed upon last month—is an attempt to limit the harm Big Tech causes European markets, the Digital Services Act aims to tackle the damage platforms can cause European societies.

In a negotiating session that lasted 16 hours, lawmakers also agreed that major technology companies will have to share yearly reports with the Commission about the risks their platforms face—such as illegal content or disinformation—and tell EU lawmakers how they plan to tackle them.

These rules would work in the same way as those forcing companies that produce new chemicals to report what impact the substances might have on the environment before they are able to sell the product commercially, says Mathias Vermeulen, public policy director at data rights agency AWO. “The EU is trying to do something similar for the digital age.”

HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Elon Musk strikes a deal to buy Twitter</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/technology/musk-twitter-sale.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/technology/musk-twitter-sale.html</a>
GIST	<p>Elon Musk <a href="#">struck a deal on Monday</a> to buy Twitter for roughly \$44 billion, in a victory by the world's richest man to take over the influential social network frequented by world leaders, celebrities and cultural trendsetters.</p> <p>Twitter agreed to sell itself to Mr. Musk for \$54.20 a share, a 38 percent premium over the company's share price this month before he revealed he was the firm's single largest shareholder. It would be the biggest deal to take a company private — something Mr. Musk has said he will do with Twitter — in at least two decades, according to data compiled by Dealogic.</p> <p>“Free speech is the bedrock of a functioning democracy, and Twitter is the digital town square where matters vital to the future of humanity are debated,” Mr. Musk said in <a href="#">a statement announcing the deal</a>.</p> <p>“Twitter has tremendous potential — I look forward to working with the company and the community of users to unlock it.”</p> <p>The blockbuster agreement caps what seemed <a href="#">an improbable attempt</a> by the famously mercurial Mr. Musk, 50, to buy Twitter — and immediately raises questions about what he will do with the platform and how his actions will affect online speech globally.</p> <p>The billionaire, who has more than 83 million followers on Twitter and has romped across the service hurling gibes and memes, has repeatedly said he wants to “transform” the platform by promoting more free speech and giving users more control over what they see on it. By taking the company private, Mr. Musk could work on the service out of sight of the prying eyes of investors, regulators and others.</p> <p>Yet scrutiny is likely to be intense. Twitter is not the biggest social platform — it has more than 217 million daily users, compared with billions for Facebook and Instagram — but it has had an outsize role in shaping narratives around the world. Political leaders have made it a megaphone, while companies, celebrities and others have used it to hone images and build brands.</p> <p>In recent years, Twitter has also become a target of criticism, as some users spread misinformation and other toxic content on the service. Former President Donald J. Trump frequently turned to Twitter to insult and inflame, until it <a href="#">barred him</a> after the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol last year. The company has repeatedly created policies on the fly to deal with unexpected situations.</p> <p>Mr. Musk himself has had a rocky relationship with online speech. This year, he tried to quash a Twitter account that <a href="#">tracked his private jet</a>, citing personal and safety reasons. And he has gotten into trouble with regulators over his tweets.</p> <p>On Monday, he tweeted that he hoped his worst critics would remain on Twitter, because “that is what free speech means.” He added in his statement that he hoped to increase trust by making Twitter's technology more transparent, defeating the bots that spam people on the platform and “authenticating all humans.”</p> <p>Bridget Todd, a director at UltraViolet, a women's rights organization, said Mr. Musk's deal could be treacherous for online speech because he might not be in favor of Twitter's community standards and barring users who violated those standards.</p> <p>“This is a massively slippery slope,” she said.</p> <p>In Washington, Republicans, who have long accused Twitter of censoring their views, cheered Mr. Musk's deal.</p>

“I am hopeful that Elon Musk will help rein in Big Tech’s history of censoring users that have a different viewpoint,” Senator Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee said in a tweet.

Mr. Trump told Fox News on Monday that he would stick with posting on his own social network, Truth Social. “I am not going on Twitter,” he said, but added that he hoped “Elon buys Twitter, because he’ll make improvements to it.”

Democrats were restrained on the deal. Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, declined to comment on Twitter’s sale specifically but said that President Biden “has long been concerned about the power of large social media platforms” and that they should be “held accountable for the harms that they cause.” She said Mr. Biden supported changes to online-speech and antitrust laws.

Beyond speech issues, Twitter faces questions about its business. For years, the company has struggled to gain new users and keep others returning. Its advertising business, which is the main way Twitter makes revenue, has been inconsistent. Twitter has not turned a profit for eight of the last 10 years.

Last year, the company lost \$493 million on revenue of \$5.57 billion. In contrast, Meta, the company formerly known as Facebook, had profits of \$39 billion and revenue of \$118 billion last year.

Twitter, which went public in 2013, has also had a tumultuous corporate history. It has repeatedly dealt with board dysfunction and drama with its founders, and was courted by other interested buyers in the past, including Disney and Salesforce. In 2020, the activist investment firm Elliott Management took a stake in Twitter and called for Jack Dorsey, one of its founders, to resign as chief executive. Mr. Dorsey stepped down last year.

“This company is very much undermonetized, especially compared to other platforms and competitors like Facebook,” said Pinar Yildirim, a professor of marketing at the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business. “If you look at it from a point of pure business value, there’s definitely room for improvement.”

In a statement, Bret Taylor, Twitter’s chairman, said that the board had “conducted a thoughtful and comprehensive process” on Mr. Musk’s bid and that the deal would “deliver a substantial cash premium” for shareholders.

Regulators are unlikely to seriously challenge the transaction, former antitrust officials said, since the government most commonly intervenes to stop a deal when a company is buying a competitor.

The deal came together in a matter of weeks. Mr. Musk, who also leads the electric carmaker Tesla and the rocket maker SpaceX, began buying shares of Twitter in January and disclosed this month that he had amassed a stake of more than 9 percent.

That immediately set off a guessing game over what Mr. Musk planned to do with the platform. Twitter’s executives initially welcomed him to the board of directors, but he reversed course within days and instead began a bid to buy the company outright.

Any agreement initially appeared unlikely because the entrepreneur did not say how he would finance the deal. Twitter’s executives appeared skeptical, too, given that it was difficult to discern how much Mr. Musk might be jesting. In 2018, for example, he tweeted that he planned to take Tesla private and inaccurately claimed that he had “funding secured” for such a deal.

Twitter responded to Mr. Musk’s offer by putting a “poison pill” in place, a defensive maneuver that prevented the billionaire from accumulating more than 15 percent of the company’s shares.

The skepticism began dissipating last week when Mr. Musk revealed in a securities filing that he had obtained commitments worth \$46.5 billion to finance his offer for Twitter.

Morgan Stanley and a group of other lenders offered \$13 billion in debt financing and another \$12.5 billion in loans against Mr. Musk's stock in Tesla. He was expected to add about \$21 billion in equity financing. Twitter did not provide details of the equity financing on Monday. It also set no conditions for Mr. Musk's financing that would prevent him from closing the deal.

The financing commitments forced Twitter to weigh Mr. Musk's bid seriously, people with knowledge of the situation have said, particularly as he threatened to take the offer directly to shareholders in a hostile bid.

Over the weekend, in a series of calls and video meetings, Twitter's board and the billionaire's deal makers hashed out terms for the purchase. The teams worked late Sunday and into Monday on the final details.

Twitter's financial advisers were Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Allen & Company, while Morgan Stanley was the lead financial adviser to Mr. Musk.

How hands-on Mr. Musk plans to be at Twitter is unclear. Among the unanswered issues are whom he might pick to lead the company and how involved he would be in running the service. In addition to leading Tesla and SpaceX, Mr. Musk has other companies, such as Neuralink, which aims to build a computer interface for the human brain, and the Boring Company, which makes tunnels.

Twitter's current chief executive, Parag Agrawal, took over in November. Mr. Agrawal has been working toward "decentralizing" the social network so that Twitter would make fewer content moderation decisions and users would have more control over their social feeds. He is expected to remain in charge at least until the deal closes.

How many of Twitter's employees want to pursue Mr. Musk's vision is also uncertain. Some have been frustrated by the lack of communication over the takeover fight.

In a meeting with employees on Monday afternoon, Mr. Agrawal and Mr. Taylor, the chairman, nodded to the emotions of the day and how workers were most likely processing the news of a sale.

"It's important to acknowledge that all of you have many different feelings about what is happening," Mr. Agrawal said in the meeting, which The New York Times listened to. He said it might take three to six months for the deal's completion, so "in this moment, we operate Twitter as we always have."

The deal, which has been approved by Twitter's board, is expected to close this year, subject to a shareholder vote and certain regulatory approvals.

In the employee meeting, Mr. Agrawal acknowledged the uncertainty ahead. "Once the deal closes, we don't know what direction this company will go in," he said.

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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 West Africa park rangers battle militants</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/park-rangers-enter-fray-west-africas-battle-with-militants-2022-04-26/">https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/park-rangers-enter-fray-west-africas-battle-with-militants-2022-04-26/</a>
GIST	<p>DAKAR, April 26 (Reuters) - When a dozen suspected Islamist militants from a neighbouring country were spotted riding motorcycles through the W National Park in northern Benin armed with AK-47 assault rifles, park rangers snapped into action.</p> <p>From an operations room at their base, the park director and two senior ranger officers sent anti-poaching units to pursue the men who eventually fled into Nigeria, according to a confidential incident report reviewed by Reuters.</p>

They also directed Benin's army and police where to position their forces and deployed an airplane and helicopter belonging to the park as part of a broader operation to surveil and "neutralise" the target, the undated park report said.

It was prepared by the anti-poaching force to assess the response and make recommendations for improving future collaboration among rangers, army and police, including creating a "rapid intervention/commando unit capable of responding to multiple threats and especially those linked to terrorism."

The previously unreported account of the 36-hour chase in June 2020 offers a rare glimpse into how conservation group African Parks has gone beyond protecting flora and fauna and engaged in pursuing Islamist insurgents in West Africa.

The blurring of lines between conflict and conservation has raised concern among some experts, who say it could encourage governments to lean on rangers to support their depleted armies and undermine security by making rangers a target for jihadists.

"This is not the rangers' fight," said Sergio Lopez, the president of Wildlife Angel, a French non-profit that trained park rangers in Burkina Faso and Niger until 2019. "The fight against terrorism is special forces."

Non-profit African Parks is based in South Africa and manages W and the adjacent Pendjari National Park in Benin.

It is in talks to extend operations to parks in Burkina Faso and Niger and to support the management of a park in Ivory Coast, officials in these countries say.

All four are on the frontlines of the battle to contain a jihadist threat that has steadily grown since 2012, when al Qaeda-linked fighters first seized parts of Mali. Thousands have been killed in the insurgency and millions displaced.

Asked about the report, African Parks' Chief Operations Officer Charles Wells told Reuters the rangers' actions were consistent with the group's mandate of "ensuring park integrity and countering all threats to it."

"This is an extreme situation, where both the national security as well as the last functioning conservation system at scale in West Africa are at grave risk."

He added that African Parks' role sometimes went beyond its main aim of preserving the natural habitat and supporting local communities' needs.

"In a simplistic and ideal world, there might be such a line. In reality this is indeed blurred."

There have been several attacks in northern Benin since December, including two on Feb. 8 and Feb. 10 by suspected al Qaeda-linked militants that killed four rangers, their French instructor, two African Parks drivers and one Beninese soldier.

Benin's government and defence ministry did not respond to requests for comment about using African Parks to counter the militant threat.

Some other conservation groups have been involved in incidents with suspected militants in the region, but African Parks is by far the biggest.

Regional powers have struggled to contain militant violence, and former colonial power France, frustrated by slow progress and facing public hostility to its presence, said it is halving its 5,000-strong counter-terrorism force in the region.

Financed by the European Union and private foundations, African Parks does not charge for its services, although Benin and Rwanda's governments have committed funding to their parks.

The group equips and trains rangers who sometimes find themselves facing off against heavily-armed militants, militiamen and poachers.

A European Union official said the EU was unaware of the 2020 incident.

The official added that Benin forces should lead the response to security threats but that African Parks was, at the same time, responsible for protecting parks it operates in "against any kind of threat".

As African Parks seeks to expand into parklands that form a vast belt of territory used by militants to press south from strongholds in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger into coastal nations, opinion over its role is divided.

Some regional experts hope it will help counter extremists who are waging an insurgency that leaves vast stretches of West Africa's Sahel region beyond the control of governments.

Nassirou Bako Arifari, Benin's foreign minister from 2011-2015, credited the rangers with helping hold the line against encroachment by militants from Burkina Faso and Niger.

"Having this presence is like having a buffer between the national force and the terrorist groups," he told Reuters.

But some critics said African Parks' security-centric response to poaching and militancy, including fencing off large segments of the parks, has alienated some locals who depend on economic activities on those lands, potentially making them more susceptible to militant propaganda.

Wells acknowledged that local access to the parks was "a complex issue" but said African Parks had worked closely with local communities to build a "conservation-led economy".

He added that strong law enforcement was essential to protect the parks and avoid a situation similar to Burkina Faso, where he said the absence of state actors had allowed Islamist militancy to proliferate.

In 2020, African Parks had an operating budget of \$84 million spread across 19 parks in 11 countries, and its rangers are trained by ex-military officers from Europe and South Africa.

Samaila Sahailou, head of Niger's parks authority, told Reuters talks were ongoing with African Parks about handing over management of Niger's W National Park.

Benoit Doamba, who leads Burkina Faso's parks authority, said his country's talks concerned its W and Arly National Parks. These three parks, along with Benin's W and Pendjari, form the 10,000-square-kilometre "WAP Complex".

The WAP is West Africa's last major refuge for elephants and lions, but much of it has been overrun by militants in recent years.

Ivory Coast's government said last month it planned to work with African Parks to manage and secure Comoe National Park, where militants have carried out several attacks since 2020.

Describing the 2020 showdown with the militants in Benin, where African Parks has about 250 rangers, the report said: "Our ultimate objective is to limit (the group) in its movements, locate it, contain it and organise an offensive operation to neutralise it."



A helicopter and ultra-light aircraft belonging to African Parks were deployed carrying army soldiers and a senior rangers official "in the hope of locating the enemy and destroying it 'on sight' before it crosses the border". Ultimately the militants got away.

Wells said the helicopter was used to transport the soldiers to strategic positions, and the phrase "destroying it 'on sight'" did not appear in his version of the report. Reuters was unable to establish why there might be a discrepancy between the two.

In the aftermath of the incident, Wells said the rangers and army had each created their own quick reaction units, which he said operated with different missions and under different rules of engagement.

The defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Some analysts see African Parks' potential expansion - like the recent arrival of Russian private security contractors in Mali - as evidence of a new security strategy in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to replace the role played by France and its partners.

"It looks very much like these countries are giving up on Western multilateral counter-terrorism assistance in place of something they will have more control over," said Aneliese Bernard, a former U.S. State Department official in Niger.

France's military, which aims to keep some 2,500-3,000 troops in the region after its partial withdrawal, said it had no comment on African Parks. It added it remains committed to the fight against militants despite the drawdown.

The defence ministers of Burkina Faso and Niger and Mali's army spokesman did not respond to requests for comment on the potential shift.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Suicide blast south Pakistan kills 4, bomber</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://lasvegassun.com/news/2022/apr/26/suicide-blast-in-southern-pakistan-kills-3-chinese/">https://lasvegassun.com/news/2022/apr/26/suicide-blast-in-southern-pakistan-kills-3-chinese/</a>
GIST	<p>KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — An explosion ripped through a van inside a university campus in southern Pakistan on Tuesday, killing three Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver, officials said. A separatist militant group claimed responsibility and said the attack was carried out by a woman suicide bomber.</p> <p>The bombing at the University of Karachi also wounded a fourth Chinese national, as well as a Pakistani guard accompanying the van, according to university spokesman Mohammad Farooq.</p> <p>Karachi police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon said the initial investigation suggests a suicide bomber was behind the attack. He said that closed circuit television footage from the site showed a person dressed in the female burqa head-to-toe covering walking up to the van, followed by an instantaneous explosion.</p> <p>The Chinese fatalities included the director of the Chinese-built Confucius Institute, which offers Chinese language graduate classes, and two teachers.</p> <p>The Baluchistan Liberation Army, a militant group in nearby Baluchistan province, has targeted Chinese nationals in attacks in the past.</p> <p>The group's statement that followed Tuesday's attack identified the bomber as Shari Baluch or Bramsh, saying she was the group's first female bomber. The attack marks "a new chapter in the history of Baluch resistance," the statement said.</p> <p>Baluchistan has long been the scene of a low-level insurgency by armed Baluch groups demanding more autonomy and a greater share in the region's natural resources if not outright independence from Islamabad.</p>

	<p>However, the Pakistani Taliban have also targeted Chinese interest in the past. Last July, the group — also known as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan — claimed responsibility for an attack on a bus that killed nine Chinese nationals in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province. Four Pakistanis also died in that attack.</p> <p>The Pakistani Taliban are a separate group from the Afghan Taliban, their allies who have seized power in neighboring Afghanistan.</p> <p>Thousands of Chinese workers are living and working in Pakistan, with most of them involved in Beijing's multi-billion dollar project known as “One Belt One Road Project” that is to connect south and central Asia with the Chinese capital.</p> <p>A key road linking Pakistan's southern port of Gwadar, in southwestern Baluchistan province, with China's northwest Xinjiang province, is part of what is known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The project includes a number of infrastructure projects and several power projects.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Trial: NJ man is Hezbollah ‘sleeper agent’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/45-year-old-software-developer-in-us-lived-double-life-as-hezbollah-sleeper-agent-report-2920860">https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/45-year-old-software-developer-in-us-lived-double-life-as-hezbollah-sleeper-agent-report-2920860</a>
GIST	<p>A New Jersey software developer, Alexei Saab, lived a double life as a “sleeper agent” for Islamic militant group <a href="#">Hezbollah</a>, and scouted terror targets in New York City, federal prosecutors said on Monday during the start of his trial. According to <a href="#">New York Post</a>, Mr Saab, a US citizen since 2008, was arrested by the feds in 2019 and charged with several counts, including terrorism, for allegedly providing materials to the terrorist group.</p> <p>On Monday, Mr Saab faced trial in one of the many New York City buildings he has been accused of plotting to bomb. As per the <i>Post</i>, the former sleeper agent for Hezbollah allegedly moved to the United States in 2000 from Lebanon with a secret mission to apply for citizenship and plan a future attack on behalf of the militant group designated a foreign terrorist organisation.</p> <p>In his opening statement, Assistant US Attorney Sam Adelsberg noted that the 45-year-old kept up appearances as a “normal” law-abiding US citizen, while also gathering intelligence on a number of tunnels and bridges. “He posed as a regular guy,” Mr Adelsberg said, adding, “In reality, he was a sleeper agent for Hezbollah ready to strike.”</p> <p>According to <a href="#">New York Daily News</a>, the attorney further went on to say that Mr Saab, instead of doing his day job, surveyed the lower Manhattan courthouse, the FBI offices at 26 Federal Plaza, the Empire State Building and Kennedy Airport. The 45-year-old's ultimate goal, according to the report, was to scope out targets so the Islamic network “could kill Americans if Americans threatened Iran, Hezbollah's main ally”.</p> <p>The prosecutor said that Mr Saab also surveyed building in Boston, Washington DC, and other cities abroad. He even tried to murder an Israeli spy in the 1990s, <i>Daily News</i> reported. As per the Mr Adelsberg's statement, Mr Saab even allegedly gathered ““details like, how buildings were constructed. How close one could get to a building to plant a bomb as part of an attack. And whether these buildings or landmarks had weaknesses or soft spots Hezbollah could exploit”.</p> <p>“This was information that Hezbollah would use to calculate the size of a bomb needed to attack a particular target - information for determining the ideal location to place that bomb to maximize death and destruction,” the prosecutor claimed.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Mr Saab's lawyer Marlon Kirton, according to the <i>Daily News</i> report, said that his client had long cut ties with the Islamic militant group. Mr Kirton stated that his client had ceased all Hezbollah-related activity and communication in 2005. The defence attorney went on to argue that Hezbollah has</p>

	<p>never attacked US citizens in America and that Mr Saab was recruited into the group amid regional conflict between Lebanon and Israel.</p> <p>Alexei Saab is charged with providing support to a terrorist group, citizenship fraud, receiving military training from a terrorist group, fraudulent marriage, and other charges. He faces dozens of years in prison if convicted on all counts.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Drought fuels Islamist militancy in Somalia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-26/food-crisis-drought-risks-fueling-islamist-militancy-in-somalia">https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-26/food-crisis-drought-risks-fueling-islamist-militancy-in-somalia</a>
GIST	<p>Islamist militant group al-Shabaab is stepping in to help Somali communities cope with the most severe drought in decades, a move that could bolster its ranks and raise the risk that it will intensify a <a href="#">violent insurgency</a> within the country and further afield.</p> <p>The group has formed a special committee comprising seven of its leading members to respond to the drought, its spokesman Sheikh Ali Dhere said. The committee has visited communities in several drought-affected regions to distribute cooking oil, rice, sugar and other aid, pictures published by al-Shabaab-aligned media show.</p> <p>“We’re calling on Muslims all over the world to work with the committee and be part of the assistance efforts for drought-affected populations,” Dhere said.</p> <p>Al-Shabaab, which wants to impose its version of Islamic law, has been trying to topple Somalia’s government since 2006, and has been kept in check by an African Union peacekeeping force. Last week, it claimed responsibility for staging a mortar attack near the location of a swearing-in ceremony for Somali lawmakers. The insurgency has also spilled into neighboring countries.</p> <p>The effect of the drought on food security and internal displacement is being compounded by rising international commodity prices and a shortage of imported goods due to Russia’s war on Ukraine, and the crisis could make it easier for al-Shabaab to recruit new members, said Nazanine Moshiri, a climate change and security analyst for the International Crisis Group.</p> <p>“Vulnerable communities are more likely to hand over their youngsters in return for access to water points and aid if they are desperate,” she said.</p> <p>Nine million people are at risk of sliding into famine as a result of the drought, which has affected much of the Horn of Africa, according to the United Nations. About 6 million Somalis, or almost 40% of the population, are facing extreme levels of food insecurity, double the number at the beginning of the year.</p> <p>Somalia’s January harvest was the third-lowest in a quarter century, government records indicate, while UN data show households have lost around 30% of their livestock holdings due to starvation or disease since mid-2021. Water and staple food prices rose more than 140% above the five-year average in February, and prices are expected to rise further due to the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>More than 90% of Somalia’s wheat imports came from Russia and Ukraine prior to the war, but those supplies have now dried up. Somalia is also highly dependent on imported rice, vegetable oil, sugar and fuel.</p> <p>“The far-reaching repercussions of the Ukraine crisis are deeply impacting the region because of the spike in food prices, fuel and the access to certain basic commodities,” Mohamed Fall, UNICEF’s regional director for eastern and southern Africa, said in an interview. “The weeks and months to come could be worse than what we have seen already.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Extremists in Mali claim captured Russians</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/al-qaida-linked-group-mali-captured-russians-84295743">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/al-qaida-linked-group-mali-captured-russians-84295743</a>
GIST	<p>BAMAKO, Mali -- Islamic extremist rebels in Mali linked to al-Qaida said they have captured mercenary fighters from Russia's Wagner Group in fighting earlier this month.</p> <p>It's the first time that Mali's extremist rebels known as JNIM have claimed to capture Russian fighters. The Wagner Group fighters were seized in the first week of April in the mountainous Segou region of central Mali, said the JNIM statement, which called the fighters "criminals."</p> <p>Since the beginning of the year, several European countries have denounced the presence of Wagner's Russian mercenaries, estimated to be about 1,000, who fight alongside Malian soldiers. They have been blamed for killing about 300 civilians in the central town of Moura. They have also been blamed for staging burials of bodies near the Gossi military base and trying to blame French military forces for the graves.</p> <p>However, Mali's ruling junta denies that Wagner's forces are fighting in the country, saying instead that they are training Malian soldiers as part of cooperation between Mali and Russia.</p> <p>It's likely that JNIM delayed claiming responsibility for the kidnappings until the Wagner fighters could be transferred to a secure place before negotiations begin, Baba Dakono, a researcher at the Citizen Observatory on Governance and Security in Mali, told The Associated Press.</p> <p>"When these kinds of people are captured by armed groups like the JNIM, there is generally an opening of negotiations with the Malian authorities or the authorities of their country for their release. Very often this release is done through an exchange of prisoners and the payment of a ransom," he said.</p> <p>However, he warned, "when these negotiations do not succeed, the hostages will be executed with a staging of their execution which can serve as a communication campaign for the kidnappers."</p> <p>The Wagner Group sends mercenary forces, many former Russian military soldiers, to several African countries and other places including Ukraine and the Mideast. Although the Kremlin officially denies any connection to Wagner, the group is strategically used to further President Vladimir Putin's ambitions to increase Russia's influence and undermine democracy, say analysts.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Canada report: extremists infiltrate military</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/canadian-report-warns-of-extremist-infiltration-in-military/2022/04/25/7c45429c-c4cf-11ec-8cff-33b059f4c1b7_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/canadian-report-warns-of-extremist-infiltration-in-military/2022/04/25/7c45429c-c4cf-11ec-8cff-33b059f4c1b7_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>OTTAWA, Ontario — The Canadian Armed Forces is not doing enough to detect and prevent white supremacists and other violent extremists from infiltrating the military, said a report released Monday by Defense Minister Anita Anand.</p> <p>The report comes after a yearlong review by a panel of retired Armed Forces members and follows a number of incidents linking some military personnel with violent extremism and hate groups, including white supremacists and neo-Nazis.</p> <p>The report describes the suspected presence of extremists in the military as a "pressing moral, social and operational issue," with such members representing a threat to unit cohesion and Canadians' trust in the institution.</p> <p>Despite adopting a zero-tolerance approach, efforts to detect extremists were "siloed and inefficient" and extremists themselves were more adept at avoiding detection.</p> <p>"The need for education and training for leaders at all levels of the defense team was highlighted repeatedly during the advisory panel's consultations," the report said.</p>

	<p>Anand said the government has earmarked more than CDN\$200 million (US\$157.1 million) to help change the military's culture but did not lay out any specific new measures.</p> <p>Gen. Wayne Eyre, chief of the defense staff, said the military needs to find a balance between privacy concerns and remaining vigilant when it comes to things like monitoring members' social media posts.</p> <p>The report also took the military to task for not acting on dozens of previous studies and reviews on racism in the ranks over the past two decades.</p> <p>White men account for 71% of Canadian military members but only 39% of the country's civilian workforce. The report notes Indigenous people and women are significantly under-represented in Canada's armed forces.</p> <p>One example of right-wing extremism in the Canadian military came in 2017 during an incident in Halifax where a group of sailors associated with the Proud Boys disrupted an Indigenous ceremony.</p> <p>A military intelligence report later linked dozens of Armed Forces members to extremist groups and warned that such organizations were actively recruiting or otherwise trying to infiltrate the military to gain training, experience and equipment.</p>
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 India record heat since March to worsen</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/04/25/india-record-heat-march-april/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/04/25/india-record-heat-march-april/</a>
GIST	<p>Temperatures in India remain high amid ongoing heat waves that have plagued the country with dry, sweltering weather since early spring. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) <a href="#">stated</a> that its March maximum temperatures were the highest in nearly a century and a quarter, and rainfall was only running about a quarter to a third of normal.</p> <p>A hot weather pattern has persisted in many parts of India during April, and the highest temperatures yet may afflict the country Wednesday into the weekend.</p> <p>A large majority of Indian households live in poverty and lack air conditioning, increasing the population's vulnerability to heat. Older adults are especially at risk from high temperatures.</p> <p>The sky-high temperatures exemplify the overlap between natural variability and the effects of human-caused climate change, which are known to make heat waves more intense and prolonged.</p> <p><b>Another heat wave on the way</b></p> <p>On Monday, <a href="#">several cities</a> across the nation registered highs over 109 degrees (42.8 Celsius); the city of Wardha in the west-central state of Maharashtra soared to 113 degrees (45 Celsius).</p> <p>Temperatures are forecast to rise further, leaping 10 to 15 degrees (5.5 to 8.3 Celsius) above average during the second half of this week, reigniting worry for those without any way to escape the heat. Portions of northern and western India, especially areas near the borders with Pakistan and Nepal, may endure the most extreme heat. That's where highs may reach 110 to 115 degrees (44 to 46 Celsius) Wednesday and Thursday.</p> <p>Between Friday and Sunday, temperatures could climb as high as 120 degrees (49 Celsius) if the most extreme forecast models are correct.</p>

Temperatures may approach national records in India and Pakistan for the month of April. According to Maximiliano Herrera, an expert on world weather extremes, the highest reliable April temperature in India is 118.9 degrees (48.3 Celsius), set in Barmer in northwest India in 1958. [Nawabshah, Pakistan, about 125 miles inland from the Arabian Sea, hit 122.4 degrees](#) (50.2 Celsius) four years ago; this record, possibly the highest temperature ever observed worldwide in April, may be more difficult to beat.

A contributor to the heat is high pressure at the middle altitudes in the atmosphere, a dome-like “ridge” of sinking air that eradicates cloud cover and deflects storm systems to the north. That will allow sunshine to pour in unobstructed, heating the antecedent dry air. Overarching weather patterns suggest little relief in sight over the week to 10 days ahead, although the intensity of the heat may ease some next week.

### **A summerlike spring in India**

India’s average maximum temperature during the month of March was 91.6 degrees (33.1 Celsius), narrowly surpassing the previous record from March 2010.

Fifteen Indian states and territories have been affected by heat waves since March, according to the Center for Science and Environment, a public interest research and advocacy organization based in New Delhi. The states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh in northwest and central India were hardest hit; each having observed 25 heat wave days so far this spring.

At least one person died of heat-related causes in March in Maharashtra, while two others died after being struck by lightning.

During April alone, New Delhi, home to more than 25 million people, has hit 100 degrees (37.7 Celsius) 23 out of 25 days; the average high temperature is about 98 degrees (36.7 Celsius).

All told, the capital’s running about 4.8 degrees (2.7 Celsius) above average for the month. Delhi posted a 107-degree (41.7 Celsius) high on four April days, and nipped 108 (42.2 Celsius) on April 19.

Potentially more problematic than the lofty high temperatures, though, have been elevated nighttime lows. That’s especially true in the city, where the “urban heat island” effect spurred by cement and paved-over surfaces traps thermal energy long after the sun has set. Warm overnight lows prevent the body from having a nocturnal cool-down period, increasing heat stress and the propensity for negative health effects.

Delhi’s average nighttime low during April is 71 degrees (21.7 Celsius). Seven nights in April have failed to dip below 75 degrees (23.9 Celsius).

Since the start of March, Delhi has only received 0.01 inch of rain. The average for March and April is 1.14 inches. The drought reinforces the heat, since dry air is easier to heat up, which then saps the ground of moisture further and entrenches the cycle.

Rainfall across the country has been 71 percent lower for March 2022 than its long-term average. The IMD stated that rainfall over India has been its third-lowest since 1901.

Neighboring Pakistan had the highest worldwide positive temperature anomaly during the month of March, meaning the margin between observed temperatures and averaged temperatures there was bigger than anywhere else across the globe. Multiple stations set all-time monthly records during February and March.

Temperatures during that heat wave peaked a dozen or more degrees above average.

### **Increasing temperatures in India**

In 2020, the IMD’s Ministry of Earth Sciences published a report citing a 1.3-degree (0.7 Celsius) rise in temperatures across India as a whole between 1901 and 2018.



	<p>Under an extreme emissions scenario, it projects the frequency of summer heat waves to at least triple by the end of the century. It also cautions that the frequency of warm nights is projected to jump by 70 percent.</p> <p>Ordinarily, temperatures begin to plateau and acutely decline late in the spring during the buildup of the summer monsoon, which occurs when onshore winds transport copious moisture northward and bring heavy downpours across much of the region. However, that too is changing.</p> <p>“The overall decrease of seasonal summer monsoon rainfall during the last 6-7 decades has led to an increased propensity for droughts over India,” the ministry writes. It projects “a high likelihood of increase in the frequency (&gt;2 events per decade), intensity and area under drought conditions in India” by the end of the century.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 UN: 50B tons sand, gravel extracted yearly</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/26/50bn-tonnes-of-sand-and-gravel-extracted-each-year-finds-un-study">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/26/50bn-tonnes-of-sand-and-gravel-extracted-each-year-finds-un-study</a>
GIST	<p>Humans extract 50bn tonnes of sand and gravel every year, according to UN research, enough to build a wall 27 metres high by 27 metres wide around the planet.</p> <p>Sand is the most-exploited resource after water. But unlike water, it is not recognised as a key strategic resource by governments and industry, something, the UN says, that must change and fast.</p> <p>The UN report makes the case for greater monitoring of extraction and supply chains, measures to compensate for the associated loss of animal and plant species as well as the uneven social and economic impacts of sand mining.</p> <p>Given the extent and growing awareness of human reliance on sand for economic development in industries, ranging from construction to IT manufacturing and a number of other booming sectors, the researchers said a fundamental shift in the understanding and valuation of sand was urgently needed.</p> <p>“If our entire development depends on sand, it should be recognised as a strategic material,” said Pascal Peduzzi, director of the <a href="#">Global Resource Information Database</a> of the UN Environment Programme and lead author of the report.</p> <p><a href="#">Sand extraction</a> takes a number of different forms, from the dredging of lakes and rivers to various kinds of land mining and the crushing of rock, and is carried out by both large firms and individuals with rudimentary tools. The current rate of activity far outstrips that at which naturally occurring sand reserves can be replenished.</p> <p>An international standard on extraction is needed, the report said, if the material is to be regulated effectively and governed equitably. Among its recommendations are the establishment of legal frameworks for mineral ownership of aggregates.</p> <p>“The aim is to shift the focus on to sand as a commodity and a material that should be treated in the same light as other mineral commodities – be that mineral deposits, water, oil or gas,” said Dr Chris Hackney, a researcher at Newcastle University and another of the report’s authors.</p> <p>“These are all regulated from the local to national levels, operating within standardised international frameworks. That’s completely lacking at the moment for sand and aggregates.”</p> <p>A lack of governance has up to now created an informational black hole around the procurement and use of sand. The Global Aggregates Information Network estimated aggregates production rose 4.9% in the last year from 42.2bn tonnes in 2020 to 44.3bn tonnes in 2021. But the UN report noted: “Globally, the sand supply base is not known and only aggregate production estimates are available.”</p>

Meanwhile, sand extraction continues to drive biodiversity loss, exacerbates flood risk in removing natural barriers to storm surge such as dunes, affects the livelihoods of fishing communities and even fuel conflict. Its end uses are also some of the biggest industrial contributors to the climate crisis, with [recent estimates](#) suggesting the concrete sector, if it were measured as a country, would have the third-highest carbon emissions in the world.

[Emerging research](#) suggests more than 1,000 threatened “red list” species of animals and plants are affected by sand and gravel extraction – with that figure thought to extend to 24,000 species overall.

Yet the lack of formal recognition means sand “falls between the cracks” of policy and legislative frameworks in many countries, with its impacts hard to grasp for the consumer and previously little onus on or imperative for governing bodies to act, said Kiran Pereira, a researcher and author of Sand Stories: Surprising truths about the global sand crisis and the quest for sustainable solutions.

“Personally, I think it is difficult to understand the scale of extraction in general,” said Pereira, who also contributed to the UN report.

“However, this resource is not consumed evenly,” she added, citing the report’s recommendations for [reuse of existing construction products](#), alongside incorporation of alternative construction materials and practices in developed countries.

The appetite for sand is expected to grow considerably over coming years, with the global population predicted to reach nearly 10 billion before 2050, by which time it is thought [about 70% of people in the world](#) will live in urban areas.

A standards vacuum also has implications for the human cost of sand mining in parts of the world where governance and oversight is weak and the material is in high demand. [More than 400 people](#) in India – including government officials – are thought to have died in violence and accidents related to sand mining since 2020.

In Vietnam’s Mekong delta, which is normally subject to regulation, [illegal sand extraction](#) has reportedly increased during the pandemic, with the resources of authorities stretched and their priorities elsewhere. The demand for aggregates is again soaring, as governments around the world pursue Covid recovery strategies anchored in construction-led growth.

Hackney said standardisation would assist efforts to establish the extent of sand extraction that was made up by illegal and non-legal practices, which have up to now been complicated by a number of factors – , and act as a deterrent.

“Having those standards across the board, the frameworks and the resources for agencies at various levels to enforce them would certainly go some way to achieving this,” he said.

“This needs to come in tandem with improved monitoring of supply chains and scrutiny of links between governments, industries and other interests involved. But, together with that, the kind of top-down regulation we recommend could make quite a break in those chains.

“The whole package of these principles would make this activity less appealing and worthwhile for actors participating in it currently.”

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HEADLINE	04/25 Thousands sick from Lucky Charms cereal?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/food/2022/apr/26/lucky-charms-cereal-illness-claims-fda">https://www.theguardian.com/food/2022/apr/26/lucky-charms-cereal-illness-claims-fda</a>
GIST	They may be magically delicious, but this week Lucky Charms are in the spotlight for a very different reason.

According to a mountain of consumer claims, the cereal is causing an array of gastrointestinal symptoms, including nausea and diarrhea. The US Food and Drug Administration says it has received “hundreds” of complaints about the cereal this year. The food safety site [iwaspoisoned.com](http://iwaspoisoned.com), which lets consumers warn others when they believe a product has sickened them, paints an even more alarming picture, citing 4,500 reports of illness.

“I never take off from work but had to take two sick days because I was so ill. I honestly thought I would die,” wrote one poster. “It robbed me of a week of my life and my love for [cereal](#) as we have not had any since.”

But what’s really going on? [Food](#) safety lawyers suggest that this case may say more about human nature than about hearts, moons and horseshoes.

The FDA and General Mills, maker of the cereal, say in statements that they are investigating the case. General Mills says it has found no evidence of illness linked to the cereal, and experts are hesitant to make assumptions.

William Marler, a lawyer who has been [at the center of food safety battles](#) for decades, isn’t convinced that the cereal is to blame for the reported illnesses. “Correlation is not necessarily causation,” he wrote in an email to the Guardian, echoing [comments by colleagues elsewhere](#).

He noted the common experience of Googling a handful of symptoms and learning that the itch on your arm is almost definitely proof of a fatal illness. Something similar may be happening here, Marler suggests.

“People try to connect the dots between something that’s happening and something that’s known, but the connection may not necessarily be accurate,” he said in a phone interview.

“There are hundreds of thousands of people today in the United States that are having vomiting and diarrhea, from a bunch of different causes. And it also may be happening that some of those thousands of people also happen to eat Lucky Charms. And now they’re seeing it in the news and they’re going: ‘Hey, wait a second. I had diarrhea a week ago, and I ate Lucky Charms. Therefore, it had to be the Lucky Charms.’”

In some cases, many of the complainants may be right about the link between their symptoms and a particular food product – while many others are wrong about the same thing. He describes a [2007 case](#) in which several hundred people got sick from salmonella detected in Peter Pan peanut butter jars. “But we got 5,000 phone calls ... And the vast majority of them were people who go, ‘Well, no, I didn’t have any medical treatment,’” he said.

“You knew that there was a clear outbreak link to a product. But then you still had thousands of people presuming that they got sick from eating the product. And they probably did not.”

That’s not at all to suggest that people are making up their symptoms or trying to “game the system” – just that it’s very challenging to ascertain the source. “That’s why foodborne illness cases are sometimes really, really difficult to figure out,” he said. Without “solid epidemiological evidence – you have stool culture, you have purchase history, you have the product testing positive, you have, unfortunately, lots of people getting sick, so you can tell the common denominator of what it is – it’s kind of hard to put it together.”

And of course, some people posting online about a connection between their symptoms and a source are absolutely right, and social media such as [iwaspoisoned.com](http://iwaspoisoned.com) can be a useful tool for getting to the root of a problem. Marler once got a call from a customer saying she’d gotten salmonella from a Los Angeles restaurant and posted about it on Yelp – where dozens of others had said the same thing on the

same day. “Ultimately, the Yelp review was correct,” he said. “It was an early warning system for getting the health department to act.”

As for the Lucky Charms, Marler says he’d like to see some more hard evidence – testing of products, clear diagnoses of customers’ illnesses – to learn more.

Such illnesses aren’t unheard of; in 2018, Kellogg’s Honey Smacks – the ones with the frog on the box – were associated with a salmonella outbreak that hospitalized 34 people, [according to the CDC](#). Kellogg’s recalled the cereal that June.

And last year, a Los Angeles comedian made waves online when he [claimed to have discovered shrimp tails](#) in his Cinnamon Toast Crunch, leading to a very public exchange with General Mills.

In the meantime, some customers will be wary of Lucky Charms, which celebrates its 60th birthday in 2024. As [another post said](#): “I used to eat Lucky Charms all of the time, right before bed. Never again.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Get ready for the new, improved second</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/science/time-second-measurement.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/science/time-second-measurement.html</a>
GIST	<p>Modern civilization, it is said, would be impossible without measurement. And measurement would be pointless if we were not all using the same units.</p> <p>So, for nearly 150 years, the world’s metrologists have agreed on strict definitions for units of measurement through the International Bureau of Weights and Measures, known by its French acronym, BIPM, and based outside Paris.</p> <p>Nowadays the bureau regulates the seven base units that govern time, length, mass, electrical current, temperature, the intensity of light and the amount of a substance. Together, these units are the language of science, technology and commerce.</p> <p>Scientists are constantly refining these standards. In 2018, they approved new definitions for the kilogram (mass), ampere (current), kelvin (temperature) and mole (amount of substance). Now, with the exception of the mole, all of the standards are subservient to one: time.</p> <p>The meter, for example, is defined as the distance light travels in a vacuum during one-299,792,458th of a second. Likewise, the new definition of the kilogram rests on the second, in a manner too complicated to explain in fewer than several paragraphs.</p> <p>“All the units now are not autonomous units, but they are all depending on the second,” said Noël C. Dimarcq, a physicist and the president of the BIPM’s consultative committee for time and frequency.</p> <p>That means that conceptually, if clumsily, you could express other units, such as weight or length, in seconds.</p> <p>“You go to the grocery and say, ‘I would like not 1 kilogram of potatoes, but an amount of seconds of potatoes,’” Dimarcq said.</p> <p>Yet now, for the first time in more than a half-century, scientists are in the throes of changing the definition of the second, because a new generation of clocks is capable of measuring it more precisely.</p> <p>In June, metrologists with the BIPM will have a final list of criteria that must be met to set the new definition. Dimarcq said he expected that most would be fulfilled by 2026, and that formal approval would happen by 2030.</p>

It must be done carefully. The architecture of global measurement depends on the second, so when the unit's definition changes, its duration must not.

"It's like a once-in-every-50-year thing," said Elizabeth A. Donley, chief of the time and frequency division of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, or NIST, in Boulder, Colorado. She is on the BIPM's international consultative committee with Dimarcq. "And so it's a big deal that we want to get right, and so there's a lot of discussion. It's exciting to work on, for sure."

### **Cesium the day**

Once, humans told time by looking at the heavens. But since 1967, metrologists have defined time instead by measuring what's going on inside an atom — clocking, as it were, the eternal heartbeat of the universe.

But time still has its roots and even its nomenclature in astronomical timekeeping. Originally, it was based on the path of Earth in its daily spin, day to night and back again. Eventually, ancient Egyptian astronomers who used the duodecimal counting system, based on 12, divided the day and night into 12 hours each, giving us 24 hours in the day.

Those hours varied in length, depending on where Earth was in its orbit around the sun. A little more than 2,000 years ago, Greek astronomers, who needed fixed hours to calculate things like the movements of the moon, developed the revolutionary idea that a single day ought to be divided into 24 hours of the same length.

That same astronomical thinking led them to patch the ancient Babylonian method of counting by 60, the sexagesimal system, onto the hour. Just as they divided a circle or the sphere of Earth into 60 parts, and then 60 again — making 360 degrees — so they divided the hour.

The first division of the day's 24 hours (known in Latin as *partes minutae primae*) gave them the length of the minute, which was one-1,440th of an average solar day. The second division (*partes minutae secundae*) provided them the duration — and name — of the second, which was one-86,400th of a day. That definition stood, in effect, until 1967. (There was a brief detour into something called ephemeris time that was so complicated even metrologists did not use it.)

But the definition had problems. Earth is gradually slowing in its daily rotation; days are growing slightly longer and so the astronomical second is, too. Those small differences add up. Based on extrapolations from historical eclipses and other observations, Earth as a clock has lost more than three hours over the past 2,000 years.

Therefore, the standard unit of time, based on astronomical reckoning, is not constant, a reality that became increasingly intolerable for metrologists during the first decades of the 20th century as they discovered just how irregular Earth's spin was. Science demands constancy, reliability and replicability. So does time — and by the late 1960s, society was becoming increasingly reliant on the frequencies of radio signals, which demanded extremely precise timings.

Metrologists turned to the far more predictable movement of atomic particles. Atoms never wear out or slow down. Their properties do not change over time. They are the perfect timepieces.

By the middle of the 20th century, scientists had coaxed atoms of cesium 133 into divulging their secret inner ticks. Cesium, a silvery-gold metal that is liquid at about room temperature, has heavy, slow atoms, which means they are relatively easy to track.

Scientists put cesium atoms in a vacuum and exposed them to the energy of microwaves, in the nonvisible range of the electromagnetic field. The task was to figure out which wavelength, or frequency, would excite as many cesium atoms as possible into emitting a packet of light, or photon. The photons were picked up by a detector and counted.

The wavelength that won the contest was designated as the natural frequency resonance of the atom. Think of it as a pendulum operating in a rhythm unique to that type of atom.

In the case of cesium 133, the frequency is nearly 9.2 billion ticks per second — 9,192,631,770, to be precise. The length of the second used in the experiment was based on the length of the day in 1957 when the original scientific experiments were taking place, and was derived from measurements of Earth, the moon and stars. By 1967, metrologists at the BIPM had set the natural frequency resonance of cesium 133 as the official length of the second.

Despite that cesium-based definition, astronomical time and atomic time are still inextricably conjoined. For one thing, atomic time occasionally needs to be adjusted to match astronomical time because Earth continues to change its pace at an irregular rate, whereas atomic time remains constant. When atomic time gets nearly one second faster than astronomical time, the timekeepers stop it for a moment, allowing Earth to catch up — they insert a leap second in the year. So while the duration of the second does not change, the duration of a minute occasionally does. After an initial insertion of 10 leap seconds in 1972, timekeepers now add a leap second to atomic time roughly every year and a half.

In addition, as weird as it may seem, we still tick through 1957-era seconds, even with our modern atomic clocks. That is because the natural frequency resonance of cesium 133 was measured in 1957 and locked to the duration of the astronomical second in that year, a fact that will not change even when the second is redefined once more.

### **Not ready for prime time**

The redefinition is in the works because scientists have developed new instruments called optical atomic clocks. These operate on similar principles to cesium clocks but measure atoms that have a much faster natural frequency resonance, or tick. Those frequencies are in the visible, or optical, range of the electromagnetic spectrum, rather than the microwave range, hence the name.

There are several species of optical clock, each counting the ticks of a different atom or ion — ytterbium, strontium, mercury, aluminum and more. So far, no species has emerged as the clear favorite for the upcoming redefinition.

“Optical clocks are very definitely not ready for prime time,” said Judah Levine, a physicist at NIST’s time and frequency division. “They are laboratory projects.”

For one thing, although they are built to examine such tiny atoms, most are massive, about the size of a heavy dinner table. Some fill a laboratory. They are also difficult to operate.

“It requires a whole bunch of specialists who are chained to the table, if you know what I mean,” Levine said. “It’s not just push a button and walk away.”

In all, about 20 or 30 optical atomic clocks of all species exist today, Donley said.

Three are in Boulder. A typical one is settled on a steel slab to isolate it from floor vibrations. It is shielded from disturbances in Earth’s magnetic field. At its heart is a vacuum chamber about a foot in diameter, containing whichever atom or ion is under scrutiny. Some clocks contain a single ion. Others contain thousands of the same type of atom.

Lasers are mounted on the sides of the table. They chill the atoms or ions to near absolute zero, trapping them in place and slowing them down. Then the lasers probe the atoms or ions, beaming a nearly pure color of light on them that scientists tune to find the precise wavelength that will elicit the desired tiny shift in energy.

“Just as a child only achieves great height on a playground swing if her parent’s pushes arrive at the right rhythm, the atoms become detectably excited only if the laser color is tuned perfectly,” Jeffrey A. Sherman, a physicist in NIST’s time realization and distribution group, explained in an email.



The trick is then to be able to read the laser's color to determine the precise frequency of the wave that elicits the shift in energy. And this is where the optical atomic clock's secret weapon kicks in. A key component of the clock is a second type of laser called a femtosecond-laser frequency comb, the discovery of which led to a Nobel Prize in physics in 2005. It is a pulsed laser, equivalent to a series of spikes of light spaced by precisely the same amount, like the teeth of a hair comb.

This comb of light can read the wavelengths of the pure-color lasers that are exciting the atoms or ions. The waves are fast, moving at rhythms, or frequencies, some 100,000 times that of the microwave energy that excites cesium. This enables optical atomic clocks to measure time far more precisely than cesium clocks.

### **Reaching new heights**

Why do we need such precision? Partly because time is not just time; it is tied to, and influenced by, gravity and mass. Nor is time constant, despite what the existence of an international standard might suggest. Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity, for example, predicts that time moves more slowly when it is near a massive body, such as a planet, because it is slowed by gravity's pull.

That means that if the tick of a clock changes, even very slightly, the physical conditions in which the clock is situated may have changed, too. Being able to read these changes opens the possibility that the clocks could detect such entities as dark matter or gravitational waves, Donley said.

"They're very exquisite tests of fundamental physics, which is one of the exciting things about optical clocks," she said.

One experiment has already taken place. In 2015, physicists at NIST were in the early days of developing their optical atomic clocks. They were puzzled by the fact that the seconds were measuring slightly differently across the clocks, which were in labs spread throughout Boulder.

Then they thought about the theory of general relativity. Could these optical clocks be responding to slight changes in gravity?

They asked Derek van Westrum, a physicist at the National Geodetic Survey, which is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to investigate. In 2015 and 2018, van Westrum measured height differences among the labs where the clocks were stationed. Like time, height is linked to gravity and mass.

His traditional survey leveling techniques, which measure height above sea level, found that the clocks were indeed at different heights. Their slightly different measurements of time were capturing minuscule changes in the gravitational field. A clock just 1 centimeter higher than another ran faster.

"That Einstein's crazy prediction of what mass and gravity does to time would actually have a practical application, to me is just incredible," van Westrum said, chuckling.

If several optical atomic clocks could be placed in different parts of the world, geodesists could measure ticking differences between them, and therefore differences in height and the gravitational field, he said. For example, a network set up near a flooding river could explain where the water would flow and identify escape routes for residents.

Such possibilities lie in the future. Today, physicists are still trying to make optical clocks talk to one another over distances, an imperative for time keeping. Optical clocks cannot communicate efficiently over satellite systems, for example, because satellite time keeping is not yet optical.

Physicists are making strides. A recent experiment at NIST, published in *Nature* last year, linked the three clocks in Boulder through both optic fiber and air.

	<p>And scientists are looking once more to the heavens for help. Now, though, it is not to track the movements of planets or stars, but to use information from far beyond our galaxy.</p> <p>Using very long baseline interferometry, researchers in Italy and Japan recently tried to link two optical atomic clocks about 5,500 miles apart. The experiment involved several antennas reading radio signals from distant outer space, and then linking the information to atomic clocks.</p> <p>It worked, and for a moment time and space merged, mediated by the stars.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/25 Weary of disasters? UN: worse yet to come</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/weary-of-many-disasters-un-says-worse-to-come/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/weary-of-many-disasters-un-says-worse-to-come/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>A disaster-weary globe will be hit harder in the coming years by even more catastrophes colliding in an interconnected world, a United Nations report issued Monday says.</p> <p>If current trends continue the world will go from around 400 disasters per year in 2015 to an onslaught of about 560 catastrophes a year by 2030, the scientific report by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction said. By comparison from 1970 to 2000, the world suffered just 90 to 100 medium to large scale disasters a year, the report said.</p> <p>The number of extreme heat waves in 2030 will be three times what it was in 2001 and there will be 30% more droughts, the report predicted. It's not just natural disasters amplified by climate change, it's COVID-19, economic meltdowns and food shortages. Climate change has a huge footprint in the number of disasters, report authors said.</p> <p>People have not grasped how much disasters already cost today, said Mami Mizutori, chief of the UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction, "If we don't get ahead of the curve it will reach a point where we cannot manage the consequences of disaster," she said. "We're just in this vicious cycle."</p> <p>That means society needs to rethink how it finances, handles and talks about the risk of disasters and what it values the most, the report said. About 90% of the spending on disasters currently is emergency relief with only 6% on reconstruction and 4% on prevention, Mizutori said in an interview Monday.</p> <p>Not every hurricane or earthquake has to turn into a disaster, Mizutori said. A lot of damage is avoided with planning and prevention.</p> <p>In 1990, disasters cost the world about \$70 billion a year. Now they cost more than \$170 billion a year, and that's after adjusting for inflation, according to report authors. Nor does that include indirect costs we seldom think about that add up, Mizutori said.</p> <p>For years disaster deaths were steadily decreasing because of better warnings and prevention, Mizutori said. But in the last five years, disaster deaths are "way more" than the previous five years, said report co-author Roger Pulwarty, a U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration climate and social scientist.</p> <p>That's because both COVID-19 and climate change disasters have come to places that didn't used to get them, like tropical cyclones hitting Mozambique, Mizutori said. It's also the way disasters interact with each other, compounding damage, like wildfires plus heatwaves or a war in Ukraine plus food and fuel shortages, Pulwarty said.</p> <p>Pulwarty said if society changes the way it thinks about risk and prepares for disasters, then the recent increase in yearly disaster deaths could be temporary, otherwise it's probably "the new abnormal."</p>

	<p>Disasters are hitting poorer countries harder than richer ones, with recovery costs taking a bigger chunk out of the economy in nations that can't afford it, co-author Markus Enenkel of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative said.</p> <p>"These are the events that can wipe out hard-earned development gains, leading already vulnerable communities or entire regions into a downward spiral," he said.</p> <p>The sheer onslaught of disasters just add up, like little illnesses attacking and weakening the body's immune system, Pulwarty said.</p> <p>The report calls for an overhaul in how we speak about risk. For example, instead of asking about the chances of a disaster happening this year, say 5%, officials should think about the chances over a 25-year period, which makes it quite likely. Talking about 100-year floods or chances of something happening a couple times in 100 years makes it seem distant, Mizutori said.</p> <p>"In a world of distrust and misinformation, this is a key to moving forward," said University of South Carolina Hazards Vulnerability and Resilience Institute Co-Director Susan Cutter, who wasn't part of the report. "We can move forward to reduce the underlying drivers of risk: Inequality, poverty and most significantly climate change."</p>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 FBI: migrants in Texas subject to abuse</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dallasnews.com/news/immigration/2022/04/25/migrants-in-texas-increasingly-subject-to-kidnapping-extortion-other-abuse-fbi-says/">https://www.dallasnews.com/news/immigration/2022/04/25/migrants-in-texas-increasingly-subject-to-kidnapping-extortion-other-abuse-fbi-says/</a>
GIST	<p>EL PASO — Migrants are increasingly becoming victims of kidnapping, extortion, ransoms and physical abuse in this border region, targeted by local gangs working with major criminal organizations, the FBI said Monday.</p> <p>The groups target each other's stash houses to force recently arrived foreign nationals to call relatives here or in their home countries so they can send money to their new captors, according to Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey R. Downey.</p> <p>Downey described the gangs as "a little bit of a hybrid. ... It is the same group that smuggles them across the border, but we are also seeing ... that competitive organizations are also attempting to kidnap their victims, and bring them into their organization to extort family members out of money. So it's a very complex operation that they're running, but there are multiple organizations that are out there doing this."</p> <p>Relatives of migrants are being asked to pay thousands of dollars for the release of their loved ones. Depending on the originating country — whether Mexico, Central America or beyond — migrants already pay tens of thousands of dollars to smugglers to bring them into the United States.</p> <p>El Paso and communities in surrounding southern New Mexico are now experiencing what is happening in other cities, including Phoenix, related to the increased stash houses and ransom calls.</p> <p>The trend also comes as the number of migrants in the El Paso sector is showing a steady increase, with many coming in large groups as the peak season for migration nears.</p> <p>Last week alone, FBI agents, working in coordination with agents of the U.S. Border Patrol, rescued 24 victims from stash houses in the El Paso area, said Downey, during a virtual news conference Monday. He called the rising number of victims "serious" and a "significant uptick," adding that since January "upwards of 40" migrants have fallen prey to criminals.</p>

“The business of smuggling individuals into the U.S. is a very lucrative business,” Downey said. “There is a lot of money that flows through that operation. So that’s why these groups are doing it.”

Downey said the victims rarely report the incidents out of fear that they will be deported, but he added that specialists will be working with victims and immigration officials to figure out the best process forward. He didn’t say whether migrants would be eligible for special victim visas to cooperate with federal authorities. He also called on the community to report any unusual activity in their neighborhoods, describing potential “stash homes” with strange vehicles with “different license tags,” including “temporary tags.”

“You may also see large amounts of food and water being taken into the house on a daily basis,” he said. “You may see numerous people coming and going from these residences.”

He also urged friends and relatives of the victims who received calls for ransom to remain calm and listen carefully to what the caller is saying and demanding and to call 911 or the FBI El Paso office.

“If possible, ask to speak to the victim directly and ask how you can be assured that they are ok” and “Tell them you need time to meet their demands. ... Most importantly don’t directly challenge the caller or argue with them.”

In a statement, El Paso Sector Border Patrol Chief Patrol Agent Gloria I. Chavez said her agency is committed “to jointly targeting these Transnational Criminal Organizations.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 Record high anti-Semitic attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/04/26/antisemitic-incidents-hit-record-number-2021/7441062001/">https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/04/26/antisemitic-incidents-hit-record-number-2021/7441062001/</a>
GIST	<p>Last year saw the highest number of antisemitic incidents against Jewish Americans ever recorded by the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish civil rights group that has been tallying attacks on the Jewish community since 1979.</p> <p>The year 2021 saw a record 2,717 antisemitic incidents across the United States, up 34% from 2020 according to the ADL's <a href="#">annual audit</a>. Most of these were incidents of harassment against Jewish Americans, but assaults and antisemitic vandalism also spiked last year.</p> <p>"It's obviously disturbing that antisemitic incidents have reached historic levels after a relatively modest decline," said Oren Segal, vice president of the Center on Extremism at the ADL. "It serves as a reminder that antisemitism from across the ideological spectrum is a danger in America, and it requires that people take the threat against the Jewish community very seriously."</p> <p><b>No casualties in antisemitic attacks</b></p> <p>There were no casualties from violent antisemitic attacks in 2021, despite a more than 160% increase in such incidents from the year before.</p> <p>Last year also did not see any mass attacks like the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, which claimed the lives of 11 people.</p> <p>In recent years, Jewish institutions, educational facilities and places of worship have been steadily ramping up security.</p> <p>The number of professional security directors working in the Jewish community has more than doubled in the last four years, said Michael Masters, CEO of the Secure Community Network, the official homeland security and safety initiative of the organized Jewish community in North America.</p>

The Secure Community Network works with law enforcement and the Jewish community to set up training and security plans for places of worship and Jewish institutions and schools. Masters said these efforts have helped make such spaces safer in recent years, but that security threats are still a very real concern.

"We will not choose the time in place of the next incident, but we can choose our preparedness," he said.

The fact that nobody was killed in an antisemitic attack last year also doesn't reflect a reduction in the number or scope of threats to Jewish lives, Masters said.

"We shouldn't accept the lack of casualties as a lack of intent on the part of those who hate and are committed to violence," he said. "The number of threats that we see from people who are intending to kill Jews, intending to target the faith-based community, intending to target people of color in this country, has increased dramatically."

### **Israeli military conflict drives hate attacks**

The ADL recorded a significant spike in antisemitic incidents in May 2021, which coincided with a military conflict between Israel and the militant group Hamas.

As has historically happened when Israel engages in military conflict, the American Jewish community is targeted with increased levels of abuse, assault and vandalism, Segal said.

The incidents involve perpetrators who "blame all Jews for what the state is engaging in," Segal said. "Essentially ascribing them — Jews, all Jews, whether they support the State of Israel or not — with being somehow responsible."

The May incidents included an [attack](#) on a man wearing a yarmulke in Times Square during a protest, in which the victim was pepper sprayed, punched, kicked and hit with crutches. Across the country in Los Angeles, an anti-Israel protest [erupted](#) in a violent brawl outside a restaurant. Both incidents resulted in hate crime charges.

### **Not just extremist incidents**

One of the most disturbing findings from the ADL's 2021 audit was that only 18% of the antisemitic incidents reported were carried out by individuals known to be extremists or affiliated with extremist groups, Segal said.

Most of the almost 500 antisemitic incidents carried out by known extremist groups were propaganda distributions. White supremacist and other groups passed out antisemitic flyers, waved racist banners or posted stickers or other antisemitic written messages, the report found.

But more than 80% of the incidents in 2021 were carried out by people not known to be affiliated with extremist groups, and that worries Segal.

"That means that the majority of incidents this represents are either unknown perpetrators or average Joes and Janes and that speaks to the normalization of antisemitism as a tactic," he said. "There's a lot of people who have engaged in anti-Semitism that we wouldn't necessarily connect to any organized group, and that's a concern."

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HEADLINE	04/26 Women put 'friendly face' in Jan 6 attack?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/women-put-friendly-face-jan-6-attack-extremism-research-argues-new-stu-rcna25831">https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/women-put-friendly-face-jan-6-attack-extremism-research-argues-new-stu-rcna25831</a>
GIST	WASHINGTON — Women played a front-facing role in the Jan. 6 attack in ways that "represented a break from the norm among right-wing extremists," who have typically relegated women to subordinate positions, extremism researchers say in a new report.

The [report](#) from the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, first shared with NBC News, explores the role women played in the attack on Jan. 6, 2021. Nearly 800 defendants have been charged in connection with the attack, [with hundreds more cases in the works](#).

The report focuses on the role of the more than 100 women who have been charged, noting that female Jan. 6 defendants were, on average, older than male defendants, that they were more likely to have evidence against them pulled from social media and that they were less likely to get jail time than male defendants also convicted of misdemeanors.

The report says women have a “long history in helping to mainstream far-right ideology,” noting the role they played in the re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1960s. But the report also says the role of women has “shifted” in recent years, especially given the role social media has played in right-wing extremism.

“Social media has given women new on-ramps and ways of acting as spokespeople for far-right groups, often making their messaging more palatable to mainstream audiences,” the report says. “While social media has not radically re-written women’s roles in these groups — it has given women affiliated with these far-right ideologies a new platform to leverage in support of their cause.”

The researchers also dived into the role gender has played in sentencing, as attorneys for female Jan. 6 defendants have “articulated narratives emphasizing their clients’ naivety, vulnerability, and traditionally feminine roles.”

Hilary Matfess, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Denver, who co-authored the report with Devorah Margolin, the director of strategic initiatives for the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, said one of the most fascinating things they found was the “gap” between female Jan. 6 defendants’ social media posts and how they portray themselves in court, noting how many “again and again and again” downplayed their culpability by emphasizing their roles as mothers, daughters and caregivers.

“One thing that comes out in so many of these historical case studies that we tried to unpack a bit in this report is the role that women play in laundering some of these ideas into the mainstream and giving right-wing extremism or white supremacy a friendlier face,” Matfess said. “Women have served to soften the image of these groups, either to recruit or to be a friendly face for extremist ideology.”

Women have been among the most prominent Jan. 6 defendants. There was Rachel Powell, the [mother of eight from Pennsylvania](#) who was alleged to have been caught on video directing rioters with a bullhorn and using a battering ram to smash out a window. There was Beverly Hills, California, cosmetologist [Gina Bisignano](#), who has pleaded guilty in relation to her use of a bullhorn to call for “strong, angry patriots” to help fight police. Jenna Ryan, a Texas real estate agent who flew to Washington on a private plane and [compared](#) her treatment to that of “the Jews in Germany” during the Holocaust, was [sentenced](#) to 60 days in federal prison. And there was [Dawn Bancroft](#), the mother and former CrossFit gym owner who pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and admitted recording herself saying she wanted to “shoot” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., “in the friggin’ brain.”

There was also Ashli Babbitt, whom [Capitol Police](#) fatally shot as she climbed through a broken window while nearby members of the House were fleeing the mob. The report notes that Babbitt, a military veteran and QAnon believer, has become somewhat of a hero on the right, held up as a victim of the government.

“In the months since January 6th, Babbitt has been portrayed by far-right extremists as a Vicki Weaver-esque martyr — a visceral demonstration of the so-called threat that the supposed state overreach presents,” the report says, referring to the killing of Vicki Weaver at the government siege in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992.



	<p>Female Jan. 6 defendants have also leveraged their gender in their criminal cases, the report found. Defense attorneys "often emphasize their clients' performance of traditional gender roles and norms," including by "drawing attention to their clients' responsibility for care work (including their roles as mothers and wives) and their compassion."</p> <p>Matfess, the report co-author, said it is important that researchers stop "rediscovering the wheel" about the role women play in right-wing extremism to get a better understanding of both Jan. 6 and the operations of extremist organizations.</p> <p>"We should stop being surprised at women's contributions to right-wing extremism in the United States," Matfess said. "There's so much rich, historical information about the roles that women have played in right-wing extremism and white supremacy in United States history."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/26 DEA elite police unit in Mexico corrupt</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3v737/dea-mexico-elite-police-unit-corrupt">https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3v737/dea-mexico-elite-police-unit-corrupt</a>
GIST	<p>After more than a year of quietly choking off resources behind the scenes, Mexico's president said last week that he has effectively shut down an elite police unit trained and funded by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to investigate drug cartels, claiming it was corrupt.</p> <p>"That group, which was supposedly a high-level strategic group, was infiltrated by criminals," President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said at a press conference last week, <a href="#">confirming reports</a> that the DEA's "Sensitive Investigative Unit," or SIU, had been disbanded after more than 25 years of joint operations in Mexico.</p> <p>So far, the scrapping of the SIU has been portrayed as yet another blow to bilateral security cooperation on anti-narcotics investigations under López Obrador. But current and former U.S. law enforcement officials who spoke with VICE News say the SIU has indeed been a corruption-plagued disaster for years.</p> <p>One agent with extensive experience operating in Mexico called the SIU "corrupt and dangerous" and was not sorry to see its demise. "I am glad," the agent said. "They were dirty, no-good criminals. It's the best thing that ever happened to the U.S. government in Mexico."</p> <p>The Mexican SIU agents underwent special vetting and training in the U.S., and the squad has been credited with assisting American agents in major cases, including the capture and prosecution of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán-Loera, the notorious Sinaloa Cartel leader now serving life in prison.</p> <p>But multiple sources, some retired and willing to speak publicly and others who requested anonymity because they did not want to jeopardize jobs or ongoing investigations, described the SIU as deeply dysfunctional and constantly leaking to the cartels. Corruption is endemic among law enforcement across Mexico, but the SIU was supposed to be the exception—a group of local cops the DEA could trust. By all accounts, the SIU was dirty.</p> <p>One former SIU chief, Iván Reyes-Arzate, was <a href="#">sentenced in February to 10 years</a> in U.S. federal prison and, according to <a href="#">witness testimony</a> from 2018, leaked info that got a DEA informant kidnapped. Three other high-level Mexican law enforcement officials currently face <a href="#">narco-corruption indictments</a> in U.S. courts. Leaks from the SIU have previously been linked by ProPublica to <a href="#">a Los Zetas cartel massacre in the town of Allende</a>, and <a href="#">a deadly attack on innocent guests</a> at a Holiday Inn in the northern city of Monterrey.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Justice declined to comment.</p> <p>Mexican officials would not elaborate on their president's public comments from his April 21 press conference, where López Obrador said he was restoring Mexico's sovereignty and relations with the United States were now "good, but with respect."</p>

People familiar with the situation say the SIU program is not exactly dead, just on life support, with the potential to restart in future years. The funding—part of billions' worth of U.S. security aid to Mexico—remains in place, but López Obrador's government has reassigned many of the officers involved and choked off resources. Collaboration on security issues continues through the Mexican attorney general's office and the U.S. Embassy, which has attachés from other agencies that investigate cartels, including the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security.

One former high-level DEA official who worked closely with the SIU characterized the supposedly elite and vetted unit as a mess. Similar programs exist in over a dozen other countries and some local agents collaborate successfully with the DEA, the source said, but in Mexico: "You don't trust them with anything. You automatically assume anything you give them will be given to their superiors, the narco-traffickers, or a higher-up in the government."

The official said that under former President Enrique Peña Nieto, the SIU had more than 100 people assigned to sleek offices near the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. But it was obvious there were problems.

"Vehicles couldn't be located, radios couldn't be located," the ex-DEA official recalled. "Guys weren't showing up to work. Nobody knew what the hell they were doing."

All of the U.S.-purchased vehicles were recovered after an audit, but they soon sat parked with nobody around to drive. After López Obrador took office in 2018, most of the SIU agents were transferred out and not replaced. The unit's head count dwindled to around ten, and most of those people had not undergone the vetting and training, which involves polygraph and drug tests, a background check, and classes at the DEA's offices in Quantico, Virginia.

Another former U.S. official involved in cartel prosecutions echoed that assessment, saying the drawdown of the SIU began soon after López Obrador took office and was part of a broader chilling of relations over narco-trafficking cases. A military unit known as SEMAR, which includes the Mexican equivalent of the Navy SEALs, was more trusted than the SIU and took the lead in hunting El Chapo and other major cartel bosses, but it has also been sidelined for reasons that remain publicly unexplained.

"He took those steps as soon as he came in," the ex-official said of López Obrador. "He basically disbanded the SEMAR group that captured Chapo and the other guys. They all got reassigned. Same with the vetted unit: Their resources were reduced down to basically zero."

The ex-official, who requested anonymity for fear of jeopardizing pending cases, said that in years past, corruption in the SIU was an open secret. DEA agents would feed intelligence to certain members knowing they were in the pocket of a rival cartel, he said, especially during a war that erupted in 2008 between El Chapo's Sinaloa Cartel and a splinter faction called the Beltrán-Leyva Organization, or BLO.

"You had to make sure if you were sharing information, you would only share it with the folks in the unit who were not working for the group you were targeting," the ex-official said. "You could share BLO info with the Sinaloa guys, and Sinaloa info with the guys in BLO, but not the other way around, obviously. It was this very delicate dance with them."

While U.S. and Mexican leaders were publicly touting their successful cooperation in taking down the leaders of several major drug cartels, prosecutors in New York now allege the top commanders in charge of the federal police were on the payrolls of the BLO and the Sinaloa Cartel.

Mexico's former head of public security, Genaro García Luna, the face of the militarized drug war under ex-president Felipe Calderón, was arrested in 2019 on federal drug conspiracy charges and allegations that he took "tens of millions of dollars" from the cartels. García Luna has pleaded not guilty and his case is [scheduled for a trial later this year](#).

Two members of García Luna's inner circle are also accused by U.S. prosecutors of being on the cartel payroll. One is Ramón Pequeño, who led the Mexican federal police anti-narcotics division that oversaw

the SIU; his location in Mexico is unknown. Luis Cárdenas Palomino, another high-ranking federal police official, is [reportedly jailed in Mexico's Altiplano prison](#).

“We worked with them, and then at a certain point it was, ‘Well, these guys are all corrupt. Let’s prosecute them,’” the former U.S. official said, describing the cases.

One unnamed Mexican official [told the magazine Proceso](#) that López Obrador took issue with the U.S. Justice Department’s plea deal with Reyes-Arzate, which was interpreted as a sign that the ex-SIU commander is cooperating and could testify against García Luna.

“The president took it as a joke,” the Mexican official reportedly said. “Reyes-Arzate is proven to be mixed up with the narcos, with the Sinaloa Cartel, but the DEA pardoned him. That’s why there can’t be collaboration with U.S. agents.”

The federal judge who sentenced Reyes-Arzate took the unusual step of explicitly saying in open court that the defendant is not a cooperator, but that has not persuaded skeptical Mexican officials. The source who spoke to *Proceso* called the Reyes-Arzate plea agreement “a hypocrisy” that “equally exposed the corruption of the American agents.”

Securing the cooperation of ex-narcos has been a key strategy for the DEA and U.S. federal prosecutors. El Chapo’s trial, which ended with a conviction in January 2019, surfaced allegations that the Sinaloa Cartel [bribed a member of López Obrador’s campaign staff in 2006](#), as well as bombshell testimony from a former high-ranking cartel member who alleged [Enrique Peña Nieto took a \\$100 million payoff](#) during his presidency. Both men have vehemently denied the claims, but the recent extradition of Honduran ex-president Juan Orlando Hernández to face narco-corruption charges has shown that U.S. prosecutors are not afraid to charge a former head of state.

Relations between the DEA and López Obrador’s government hit a nadir in 2020 following the [surprise arrest](#) of Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos, a former secretary of defense who was [accused of cartel corruption](#) and taken into custody while coming to visit Disneyland with his family. Mexican officials [pressured the U.S. into dropping the charges](#), Cienfuegos was allowed to return home with [no repercussions](#), and Mexico subsequently passed a law that requires foreign agents to share intelligence with their domestic counterparts.

American agents continue to have a presence in Mexico, but the new law has further hamstrung the DEA’s ability to work, said Derek Maltz, former head of the agency’s Special Operations Division.

“Investigations would be significantly compromised if any foreign agent followed the rules AMLO put in place after the Cienfuegos disaster,” Maltz said. “You can’t work that way in Mexico. You’ll have agents and families killed, and informants killed. It has made a drastic impact on overall operations in Mexico.”

While the SIU is touted for successes in other countries — a Colombian SIU agent testified against El Chapo—watchdogs within the U.S. government have flagged problems with “lack of accountability and oversight” since [at least 2007](#). VICE News [previously obtained documents](#) showing how the DEA was struggling to address the same problems more than a decade later.

And it appears little has changed.

Last August, the Justice Department’s Inspector General again warned that “the DEA’s involvement with and funding of foreign law enforcement units in areas known for pervasive corruption can pose significant risks to DEA personnel, information security, the safety of U.S. and foreign civilians, and diplomatic relations.” In October, a Colombian police captain who oversaw that country’s SIU program [pleaded guilty in Miami federal court](#) to charges that he leaked sensitive information about DEA investigations to drug traffickers.

In another case, an ex-DEA agent who worked with the Colombian SIU admitted to [conspiring to launder millions of dollars](#) from DEA-controlled accounts and spending the money on luxury cars and jewelry. Two SIU members were present with DEA agents during cartel-organized [“sex parties”](#) with prostitutes, according to an Inspector General’s report from 2015.

Even SEMAR, the vaunted Mexican military unit credited with twice capturing El Chapo, has [faced credible allegations](#) of disappearing civilians and terrorizing communities suspected of sheltering fugitive kingpins. While easily written off as collateral damage in the war against the cartels, U.S. training and funding of foreign police and military has left a trail of [corruption](#) and [violence](#) across Latin America.

Law enforcement sources defended the SIU program as a whole, but longtime drug warriors who served for the DEA in Mexico saw the futility in the “elite” unit’s work, which was ultimately funded by American taxpayers.

“If you put a dollar amount on the product seized,” the ex-DEA official said “we were probably paying millions of dollars for one kilo.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 D.C. chief: school was in sniper ‘crosshairs’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vb/2022/04/25/bowser-dc-shooting-school-vanness/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vb/2022/04/25/bowser-dc-shooting-school-vanness/</a>
GIST	<p>D.C. Police Chief Robert J. Contee III said the sniper who sprayed bullets across the Van Ness neighborhood in Northwest Washington on Friday had his sights on a nearby private school, firing more than 200 bullets out his apartment window, with about 800 unspent rounds in his residence.</p> <p>“The school was certainly in his crosshairs,” Contee said, referring to the shooter as a “lone-wolf sniper.”</p> <p>Raymond Spencer had six firearms in the apartment on Van Ness Street, including three fully automatic rifles, the chief said at a news conference Monday. He said police found thousands more rounds of ammunition inside another residence in Fairfax County, Va., and parts to assemble three additional firearms.</p> <p>Authorities said they still have not learned of any connection Spencer had to the Edmund Burke School or a motive for the shooting that wounded four people — including a 12-year-old, two women in vehicles and a school security guard who is a retired D.C. police officer.</p> <p>Two of the victims remained hospitalized in critical condition on Monday.</p> <p>Contee and Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) provided a chilling update to Friday afternoon’s attack that terrorized a stretch of busy Connecticut Avenue from Van Ness to Woodley Park and plunged residences and schools along with Edmund Burke into lockdown for hours.</p> <p>Authorities also revealed Spencer had set up a camera in the hallway outside his apartment door at the AVA Van Ness, apparently to see if police were coming. Spencer, 23, had also purchased two frozen dinners at a nearby Giant Food five hours before the rampage.</p> <p>Police described his fifth-floor apartment as a “sniper’s nest” with a view of a glass-enclosed bridge that links two school buildings at Edmund Burke and where parents line up in cars to pick up children at dismissal. He had turned the apartment bathroom into a makeshift command center, with a laptop computer, a cellphone and a rifle and a pillow in the tub.</p> <p>Police also said they learned new details about Spencer, who they said fatally shot himself in that bathroom as police breached his door about 5½ hours after he opened fire around 3:20 p.m. He had attended Wheaton High School in Montgomery County, had been a lifeguard and had briefly served in the U.S. Coast Guard in 2017, police said.</p>

But other parts of Spencer's life remain a troubling mystery to law enforcement, including how he paid for the apartments he leased in the District starting in January and in the Fair Lakes area of Fairfax County starting in February 2021, and how he afforded his expensive arsenal.

But even more critically, police said they do not know why he apparently indiscriminately fired toward the school.

"Everybody wants to know," Contee said, adding, "And we want to be able to provide those answers."

Bowser billed Monday's news conference as a discussion of public safety in the District, and announced the creation of a new Violent Crime Impact Team, in which local authorities will partner with federal law enforcement agencies to target violence in specific areas where shootings are most prevalent.

Contee noted that on Friday and Saturday, police responded to a total of 10 shooting incidents with 15 victims, including a shooting of a man in a wheelchair and the shootings of three people in Brightwood Park. Both attacks occurred as police were in the midst of tracking down the sniper, evacuating buildings and securing the area around Van Ness.

Also over that 48-hour period, a construction worker directing traffic was shot by a person on a ride-share bicycle who was upset with delays, and a man was fatally shot and stabbed during an argument at a birthday party.

On Monday, as the mayor's briefing was wrapping up, a person was fatally shot in Northeast Washington. Police said they have seized 969 illegal guns in the District this year, a 50 percent increase from this point in 2021.

Contee has frequently said that people react to crime differently depending on their "proximity to the pain." Of the crime experienced over the past three days, the chief said, "This should be painful to all of us."

Homicides, which have trended upward in the District for the past four years, are down 10 percent year-to-date. But violent crime is up 26 percent, driven by a spike in robberies and carjackings. A recent poll by The Washington Post found that 3 in 10 District residents do not feel safe in their neighborhoods.

The crime concerns come as Bowser seeks reelection to a third term and as a June 21 primary is approaching. Public safety and the Van Ness shooting were key topics of debate the day after the sniper attack at a candidates forum, where Bowser came under criticism from opponents.

On Monday, the mayor said gun violence affects not only victims but also "people who live in communities where they are fearful, where they witness crimes, where they hear gunshots, or where they can't enjoy the peace and tranquility of their own homes."

Officials at the news conference also displayed piles of firearms that police had recently seized in the District, with Bowser saying she wanted to "display some of the firepower that MPD is up against on our streets." Some of those weapons were from Spencer's apartment.

Authorities said they are meticulously collecting and documenting evidence, and as of Monday were still at Spencer's apartment processing the crime scene. Meanwhile, police are starting to build out a rough timeline of events around the shooting.

Contee said Spencer moved into the AVA Van Ness apartment in January, filling out his lease agreement online. The chief said investigators are trying to determine how the young man could afford two residences, and "how he's paying his bills and keeping the lights on."

Other tenants have said they encountered Spencer infrequently. In the days leading up to the shooting, police officials said they believe Spencer had searched Wikipedia pages on the recent attack in the New York City subway and a school shooting in Florida.

The night before the attack, Contee said, surveillance video shows Spencer wheeling a suitcase into the building, and officials have previously described his apartment as sparsely furnished, with a mattress on the floor.

Law enforcement officials with knowledge of the investigation have said authorities are examining Internet posts that might be by Spencer, particularly on the 4chan platform, where a user going by “Raymond Spencer” wrote “Dear God please forgive me” at 3:24 p.m., shortly after the shooting began.

The user posted another message at 3:30 p.m., which Contee said appeared to be directed at police: “They’re in the wrong part of the building right now searching XD.”

A final message was posted on 4chan at 3:36 p.m.: “Waiting for police to catch up with me.”

Separately, the Edmund Burke School Wikipedia page was revised online Friday to read, “A basedman shot at the school on April 22, 2022. The suspect is still at large,” according to the Wikipedia page’s history, which showed a change shortly after 4 p.m. made by a user going by “Raymond Spencer.” Shortly after, the user replaced “basedman” with “gunman” and added “(Hope they catch him soon!)” next to the edit, according to the Wikipedia page’s history.

It was unclear how Spencer either obtained three fully automatic rifles or modified the rifles to fire continuously with a single squeeze of the trigger. Contee said Spencer’s firearms were not equipped with a so-called “giggle switch,” or “auto sear,” components used to convert some guns into fully automatic weapons. They are illegal but accessible on the Internet and relatively easy to install.

So far, law enforcement officials have been frustrated in their efforts to establish a motive in the shooting. Contee said investigators are talking with Spencer’s family, who have not spoken publicly about the case, and he urged anyone who has interacted with Spencer to contact authorities.

Police officials have noted Spencer did not appear to try to hide his digital footprint, and used his real name on many of his posts. But it also appears he left behind few clues about his motive.

“We’re trying to really put the pieces together,” Contee said.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Police: Kent man shot while asleep at home</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/kent-man-shot-while-asleep-his-home/EMZBOXLPOBFBXKLMIDS7B5PXPA/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/kent-man-shot-while-asleep-his-home/EMZBOXLPOBFBXKLMIDS7B5PXPA/</a>
GIST	<p>KENT, Wash. — The Kent Police Department is investigating after a man was shot in the leg early Wednesday morning.</p> <p>The man, BK Ashford-Coggins, says he was asleep in his home when he woke up to pain in his shin. The pain was from a .45 caliber bullet that entered his bedroom wall during a drive-by shooting.</p> <p>Ashford-Coggins believes he’s lucky to be alive, calling it “the luckiest night of my life.”</p> <p>In total, four bullets hit his home. Two shots hit his garage, while one went through his living room window and another through his bedroom wall.</p> <p>Ashford-Coggins’ son, who was home at the time, was able to call 911. Ashford-Coggins says he’s grateful it was him who was hit instead of his son. He’s also grateful that the bullet did minimal damage to his leg. It broke skin, but the wound didn’t require surgery and only required ibuprofen for the pain.</p>



	<p>“It was a life-changing experience for me. I felt death on the doorstep even if it only hit me in the leg,” said Ashford-Coggins.</p> <p>He says despite calling Washington ‘home’ for more than 52 years, he feels the shooting was a wake-up call for him to move.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Seattle crime up, but residents less fearful?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/crime-is-up-in-seattle-so-why-are-city-residents-less-fearful/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/crime-is-up-in-seattle-so-why-are-city-residents-less-fearful/</a>
GIST	<p>Here’s something I didn’t see coming.</p> <p>Seattle University released its annual Public Safety Survey this week, and it showed that in 2021, fear of crime among people who live and work in Seattle was at its lowest level since the survey was first published in 2015.</p> <p>On a scale from 0 to 100, the overall fear of crime was 43.1 last year. That figure represents an average of two ratings: Fear of crime during the day (38.9) and fear of crime at night (47.3).</p> <p>Fear of crime in Seattle has been on a steady decline since it hit a high of 49 in 2018. The previous low was 44 in 2016.</p> <p>The reason the new low number is surprising is that reports of crime were up in 2021, something that has been widely reported on. According to the Seattle Police Department, there were 47,773 reported crimes last year, a 10% increase from 2020, and up nearly 13% from 2019. The number of both violent crime and property crime increased.</p> <p>Without question, many city residents are deeply concerned about the surge in crime. So it’s perplexing that the fear of crime has continued its downward trend.</p> <p>“It’s definitely interesting, because you would expect fear of crime to go up,” said Jacqueline Helfgott, who is the director of Seattle University’s Crime &amp; Justice Research Center and led the survey.</p> <p>But Helfgott notes some other trends revealed in the survey may have helped ease fear of crime. In a series of questions that relate to feelings of social and physical disorder in an individual’s neighborhood, there was a five-point improvement from 2020 to 2021. These questions concern things like disorderly conduct, public drug and alcohol consumption, graffiti, litter and so on.</p> <p>That improvement may help explain the decrease in the fear of crime, Helfgott says.</p> <p>“Much of the fear of crime is just a perception of how safe people feel about their environment,” she said, “and there’s definitely research to support that the more social cohesion there is for people in a community, the more they feel they have some control over what’s happening to them, and the more that decreases fear of crime.”</p> <p>Helfgott also notes that while fear of crime has gone down, violent crime was one of the top five themes citywide. The survey also allows respondents to add comments, in their own words, about public safety issues in Seattle. The Seattle University research team identifies the top themes from these comments.</p> <p>“There’s been no other year where violent crime made it up to the top themes, and certainly no other year where violent crime was a top theme ... in so many neighborhoods,” Helfgott said.</p> <p>The rate of violent crime has traditionally been fairly low in Seattle when compared with other large U.S. cities (the property crime rate here, on the other hand, is among the highest). But there were 5,375 reports of violent crime in 2021, an increase of about 20% from 2020, so it’s understandable that city residents are concerned about this issue.</p>

The survey includes five questions related to fear of crime, and the results are combined to produce the overall ratings. Respondents are asked to rate, on a scale from 0 to 100, how often they worry about the following: break-ins to their home or work, vehicle theft, having things stolen from them in public, being sexually assaulted, and being physically attacked. Respondents are asked to rank these fears separately for daytime and nighttime.

The survey results are broken out by the four police precincts and the 58 micro-communities.

Among the precincts, fear of crime was highest in the West Precinct, which includes downtown Seattle, at 47.4, and lowest in the East Precinct, at 39.7.

Among the micro-communities, the highest fear of crime was 56 in the Sodo neighborhood, and the lowest was 30.7 in West Seattle's Pigeon Point.

There were nine micro-communities where the fear of crime rating was higher than 50, including various neighborhoods downtown, other commercial areas and Georgetown, all of which report relatively high crime statistics.

More surprising were two relatively low-crime areas of West Seattle where the fear was among the highest: Alki and Morgan Junction.

The fear of crime rating in Alki was 52.4. But that heightened fear may be due to a sharp increase in crime last year — Seattle Police Department data shows that reports of violent crimes more than doubled in Alki from 2020 to 2021 (from 12 to 26 reports). Property crime also increased significantly faster than the citywide average.

Morgan Junction, where the fear of crime rating was 51.6, did not have a similar spike in reported crime.

Another area with high fear of crime is Genesee, south of Mount Baker in South Seattle. The fear of crime rating was 52.7 in 2021, the fourth highest of any micro-community, and just a fraction lower than Seattle's downtown commercial area. As in Alki, the number of violent crimes in Genesee more than doubled from 2020 to 2021, increasing from 12 to 29. Property crime also increased a lot faster than the citywide average.

A total of 9,132 people completed the survey, which was made available in 11 languages, and outreach efforts helped target underrepresented communities. Even so, women and white people were overrepresented in the pool of respondents to the survey, but the data was weighted to be more representative of Seattle's population along a number of factors, including gender, race and age.

Helfgott adds that the Seattle University research team is looking for people willing to participate in virtual community-police dialogues via Zoom from May through August. These will offer community members the chance to discuss the 2021 Seattle Public Safety Survey findings as well as current concerns about public safety and security at the precinct level.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Seattle police: stabbing Pioneer Square</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-in-serious-condition-after-stabbing-in-pioneer-square/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-in-serious-condition-after-stabbing-in-pioneer-square/</a>
GIST	<p>A 51-year-old man was seriously injured after a man stabbed him multiple times in an altercation early Monday evening at Third Avenue and Yesler Way, according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>Police received a call about the incident at 6:21 p.m., according to a SPD blotter post. Responding officers provided aid to the victim until Seattle Fire Department medics arrived.</p>

	<p>The victim was taken to Harborview Medical Center in serious condition, Seattle police said.</p> <p>Officers recovered the knife at the scene and arrested the 38-year-old suspect a block away, according to the blotter post.</p> <p>The suspect will be booked into the King County Jail for first-degree assault.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Texas halts Melissa Lucio's execution</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-review-melissa-lucios-death-sentence-calls-clemency/story?id=84294053">https://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-review-melissa-lucios-death-sentence-calls-clemency/story?id=84294053</a>
GIST	<p>The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles has ordered a court to consider new evidence regarding the case of Melissa Lucio and the death of her daughter, Mariah. Lucio is on death row and was scheduled to be executed on April 27.</p> <p>The execution will be halted as the 138th Judicial District Court of Cameron County considers the evidence.</p> <p>In a statement following the announcement, Lucio thanked those who have supported her fight for clemency.</p> <p>"I thank God for my life," Lucio said. "I am grateful the Court has given me the chance to live and prove my innocence. Mariah is in my heart today and always. I am grateful to have more days to be a mother to my children and a grandmother to my grandchildren."</p> <p>Lucio was sentenced in 2008 for the death of her 2-year-old daughter, one of Lucio's 14 children.</p> <p>Her lawyers say new evidence shows that the cause of her daughter's injuries and subsequent death were caused by a fall down a steep staircase outside their apartment in Harlingen, Texas.</p> <p>They say Lucio was coerced into a false confession after hours of intense police interrogations.</p> <p>A supplementary filing submitted by Lucio's attorneys asserts that the conviction was based on a false confession and false or poor testimony from medical examiners and specialists. They are asking the court to withdraw its order setting Lucio's execution date.</p> <p>The filing states that there is "overwhelming evidence that the judgment this Court set for execution on April 27, 2022, represents a miscarriage of justice."</p> <p>Lucio had said she is "at peace" regardless of the decision, according to a recently released statement.</p> <p>"Either way I will get my freedom soon," the statement read. "I will go home to my family or go to heaven. If I get a new trial, I am ready for the fight. I am not the same person I was in that interrogation room. I would stand up for my rights today. I want other survivors of domestic violence and assault to stand up for their rights too."</p> <p>In the days leading up to Lucio's clemency hearing, political and social justice figures held rallies and prayer vigils to protest her death sentence.</p> <p>State lawmakers including Reps. Joe Moody, Rafael Anchia, Alex Dominguez, Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr. and more met with Lucio in early April to join the fight.</p> <p>"Melissa Lucio checked all the boxes of the ideal culprit, right? She is a little Latina mom with too many children, with a drug addiction," Sabrina Van Tassel, the director of the documentary "The State of Texas Vs. Melissa," said at a press conference Sunday.</p>

	<p>"After a three-year investigation, I'm here to tell you that she's not ... The world's not going to be a better place if Melissa Lucio is executed tomorrow," Van Tessel said.</p> <p>Lucio's children have also issued a plea to Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to grant their mother clemency.</p> <p>"She's more worried about her kids than anything," Bobby Alvarez, Lucio's son, said in an interview with ABC station KVUE in Austin, Texas.</p> <p>On Monday, a petition delivery and prayer vigil will be held outside Abbott's office at the Texas State Capitol, as protesters await action from the state district attorney, the Texas Board of Pardons &amp; Paroles or Abbott.</p> <p>Celebrity Kim Kardashian has also spoken out against the planned execution online.</p> <p>"So heartbreaking to read this letter from Melissa Lucio's children begging for the state not to kill their mother," she wrote. "There are so many unresolved questions surrounding this case and the evidence that was used to convict her."</p> <p>If Lucio is executed, she would be the first Latina to be put to death by Texas and the first woman to be executed by the state since 2014.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Retrial: man accused of killing 18 women</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/retrial-begin-texas-man-charged-killing-18-84292951">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/retrial-begin-texas-man-charged-killing-18-84292951</a>
GIST	<p>DALLAS -- The retrial of a man charged with killing 18 older women in the Dallas area over a two-year span began Monday, after the first jury to hear a case against him deadlocked last fall.</p> <p>The start of the trial for Billy Chemirmir, 49, was delayed by several hours after a juror did not show up on time. Chemirmir faces life in prison without parole if he's convicted of capital murder in the March 2018 smothering of 81-year-old Lu Thi Harris.</p> <p>Chemirmir's attorney entered a not guilty plea for him Monday on the charge. Chemirmir has maintained that he's innocent.</p> <p>Though Chemirmir is only being tried in Harris' death, prosecutor Glen Fitzmartin told jurors during his opening statements that they will also hear evidence that Chemirmir attacked 91-year-old Mary Annis Bartel the day before Harris was killed and that he killed 87-year-old Mary Brooks about six weeks earlier.</p> <p>"These are some of the most vulnerable people that we have in our community — three elderly women," Fitzmartin said.</p> <p>Chemirmir faces capital murder charges in all 18 of the women's deaths — 13 in Dallas County and five in nearby Collin County. However, he's currently only scheduled to stand trial in the death of Harris. Dallas County District Attorney John Creuzot, who isn't seeking the death penalty for Harris' killing, has said he plans to try Chemirmir for at least one more death, though he hasn't said whose.</p> <p>The defense declined to make an opening statement on Monday.</p> <p>Chemirmir was arrested after Bartel said a man forced his way into her apartment at an independent living community for older people and held a pillow over her face.</p> <p>Fitzmartin said that after the attack on Bartel, police found that a few days before there had been a report of a suspicious person at the independent living center where she lived. A license plate number then led officers to Chemirmir.</p>

Police detectives testified about going to his nearby apartment complex, watching as he drove into the parking lot. Detectives said he threw items into a dumpster and then, as they got him out of his vehicle, he was holding jewelry and cash in his hand.

Police have said that a large red jewelry box found in the dumpster contained documents that led them to Harris' home, where the widow was found dead in her bedroom, lipstick smeared on her pillow.

Fitzmartin said evidence will show that about two hours before Chemirmir was found with Harris' items, including her house keys, they had both been at the same Walmart.

Fitzmartin said evidence will show that Chemirmir listed jewelry that belonged to Bartel and Brooks on an online selling site. He said that Brooks and Chemirmir were also at the same Walmart prior to her death.

“All of this evidence is going to be overwhelming for you all,” Fitzmartin said.

As in the first trial, jurors on Monday were shown a taped deposition with Bartel, who died in 2020. She said that on the day she was attacked, she'd opened her door after hearing an “insistent” knocking and immediately fixated on green rubber gloves the person was wearing.

Bartel said she tried to push the door shut but was overpowered. “He said: ‘Don’t fight me, lie on the bed,’” she said. She said her attacker “slammed” the pillow to her face and used “all his weight to keep me from breathing.”

Bartel, who lost consciousness during the attack and later discovered she was missing her wedding band, diamond engagement ring and other jewelry, said she couldn’t remember details about the appearance of the man who attacked her.

The number of people Chemirmir was accused of killing grew after his arrest, with most of the families of his alleged victims only learning months or years after their loved one’s death that authorities believed they had been killed.

Most of the people Chemirmir is accused of killing were found dead in their apartments at independent living communities for older people, where he allegedly forced his way in or posed as a handyman. He’s also accused of killing women in private homes, including the widow of a man he had cared for in his job as an at-home caregiver.

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